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THE CAPTAIN OF THE CLUB; or, THE YOUNG RIVAL ATHLETES.

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG, (Jack Harkaway.)



WHEN THEY WERE WITHIN TWENTY YARDS OF HOME THEY WERE NECK AND NECK, AND THE PLAUDITS OF THOSE ON SHORE RUNG IN THEIR EARS, STIMULATING EACH TO FURTHER EXERTION.

The Captain of the Club;

OR,
The Young Rival Athletes.

A Romance of Truth and Treachery.

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,
(JACK HARKAWAY,)
AUTHOR OF "ISLAND JIM," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLUB BOYS "AT HOME."

In Westchester county, New York State, within easy access of the Harlem river, is the pleasant little town of Sweetwater.

Situated on the outskirts of the town is an old house, or rather mansion, dating back to pre-revolutionary times, but still in a good state of preservation.

There is a legend about the old house, to the effect that General Washington once made it his head-quarters, but there are so many old houses in which Washington is said to have slept that perhaps we must not attach too much credence to this story. However, it is a fine old mansion, spacious and roomy, with an old-fashioned Doric portico approached by a flight of steps, and it cannot fail to recall the past to the beholder.

It was occupied at the time our story opens, and that is only a short while ago, by an elderly, genial gentleman named Dr. Smiley, who was not a doctor of medicine, but a doctor of divinity. His wife had been dead some years, leaving him as a pledge of her affection one child, a daughter, named Teresa, generally called Tessy, who at seventeen was one of the most amiable and lovely girls it is possible for the mind of man to imagine.

Her hair was of a beautiful blonde color, which when the sun shone upon it, seemed to have been sprinkled with gold-dust; her features were regular; her eyes blue as the cerulean vault of heaven; her lips red as the cherry; her cheeks dimpled, her hands and feet small, and her figure symmetrical as that of a Grecian goddess.

The homestead was Dr. Smiley's own property, he having inherited it from his father, and he had a small income, to eke out which he received as boarders a few private pupils who were reading for the ministry, the bar, the army or the medical profession.

To assist him in his labors he engaged a middle-aged gentleman, who called himself a professor, and claimed to come from some distant Western college.

This gentleman's name was Snapper, and no two men could be more unlike each other than the genial, kindly doctor, who was beloved by all who knew him, and the grouty, snarling, captious, consequential Mr. Snapper.

The doctor had a kind word and a smile for all with whom he came in contact, but Professor Snapper found fault with every one and thought it the first duty of his existence to be disagreeable, and show his authority on every possible occasion. The young gentlemen at Dr. Smiley's were seven in number, and their names were Harry Armstrong, Dan Moran, Joe Hardacre, Tom Tallman, Charley Scofield, Sim Adderly and Jesse Round—who, being a fat, good-tempered, funny boy, had received the nickname of Punch.

Harry Armstrong is our hero, and we will pause to describe him.

Imagine, then, a young man of eighteen, tall and somewhat stout, though this was more owing to his herculean frame than corpulence, for he had not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones, though his body was overlaid with thick layers of muscle; his hair was light, crisp and curly; his eye dark and piercing as an eagle's; his countenance open and straightforward, showing the generous soul within, as through a window; his walk that of a king, but his manner modest as that of a girl; rather above than below the average height; his body was well developed and he looked what he was—an athlete. His particular friend was Charley Scofield, a plucky little fellow, three years his junior.

The other young gentlemen had nothing to distinguish them from the majority of the rising generation, being honest and true, with the exception of Simeon Adderly, who was twenty-one years of age, and intending to practice the profession of the law. Sim Adderly was tall and thin, with an attenuated, cadaverous face, dark, sunken eyes, a long, protruding nose and thin, vicious lips.

His disposition was a bad one, and he hated Harry Armstrong with all the strength of a mean, narrow-minded, vicious nature.

There were many young men in Sweetwater who were fond of athletic pursuits, and they had formed two clubs.

One was called the Mamaronecks, the other the Quinsagamonds, both believing that Indian names sounded better, or at least more imposing than ancient or modern ones.

Harry Armstrong was the Captain of the Mamaroneck Athletic Club, and he excelled in every sport. The club had a boat-house on the Harlem, and being an excellent oarsman, he had acquired the title of the Terror of the Harlem River. In running, swimming, boxing, fencing, etc., he was equally invincible and indeed *façile princeps*.

This admitted prowess on the part of Harry Armstrong had excited the envy of Adderly, and his hatred was further increased by the admiration with which Miss Tessy Smiley regarded the handsome athlete.

Sim Adderly was desperately in love with Tessy, who seldom deigned to favor him with a word or a look, while she would talk unrestrainedly for an hour at a time with Harry.

It was a fine morning in the month of February. The frost, ice and snow which had characterized the preceding month had passed away and all was bright, sunny and cheerful.

The pupils were assembled in a large room, pursuing their studies under the supervision of Mr. Snapper.

"Sir," exclaimed Round, the funny boy, looking up from his book—he was going to be a civil engineer, "how many poles go to make a furlong?"

The professor laid down a pencil with which he had been working out a problem in Euclid for the benefit of Charley Scofield and replied: "You ought not to ask such a simple question."

"If I knew I shouldn't have asked. I'm seeking for information."

"Don't be uncivil!" exclaimed Snapper, sharply.

"That's right!" answered Round; "I forgot I was to be a civil engineer."

There was a laugh at this, which highly incensed the professor.

"How many poles go to make a furlong?" he repeated, like the middle-man in a minstrel troupe.

"Yes, sah; dat's de queeshon," replied Punch. "I won't tell you. Look at your tables. You are only asking this to make fun."

"No, indeed, sir! I was looking at that melancholy animal out there, and the question suggested itself at once."

Round pointed to a particularly mangy cat which had taken up a position on the windowsill.

Disease or hunger had thinned his fur wonderfully, and some parts of his body were quite bare.

"That cat," he added, "would require an awful lot of poles to make his fur long."

The boys laughed, and Harry Armstrong said: "Good for you, Punch! Chalk it up!"

Snapper reddened.

"Armstrong!" he cried, angrily, "I really must request that you will not interrupt our studies in this unseemly manner. If Round chooses to make a buffoon of himself, I can see no reason why you should encourage him in his folly. If this sort of thing is to continue, I must report it to the doctor, and beg his interference, to support my authority."

"All right, sir; don't get mad," replied Harry.

Adderly looked up from his desk.

"I, for one," he said, "think that Mr. Snapper is perfectly right. Round has put me out in an abstruse legal argument, which I shall have to go through again."

"That don't make any difference to me," retorted Armstrong.

"But it does to me, and I join in the very proper and gentlemanly protest that Mr. Snapper has just made."

"Indeed!"

"Mr. Snapper is my friend as well as my kind instructor, and I will support him to the best of my ability."

"Arcades ambo!" said Harry Armstrong, in a low tone.

Mr. Snapper pricked up his ears.

"What is that you said?" he asked.

"Too good to repeat," replied Harry, carelessly.

"Really, I think this is *too bad*," remarked Adderly.

Armstrong shut up the book he was reading, and looking the speaker straight in the face, ex-

claimed, "Sim Adderly, I don't want any of your interference in my affairs."

"But—"

"Hold on, and hear me out; this is not the first time you have attempted it. If you do it again, beware! That's all I have to say to you."

Adderly blanched and the corners of his mouth twitched.

"I think I may construe this into a threat," he said.

"Construe it into what you like."

"The law takes cognizance of language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace, and it is not absolutely necessary that a blow should be struck, for the person endangered to have his adversary held in bonds. This is distinctly laid down in Blackstone's *Commentaries*. I have Chase's edition before me now, and can cite my authority. Am I right or wrong, sir?"

"Perfectly correct," answered the professor, in a short, sharp, dry manner, worthy of a snapping-turtle.

"I accept *your* correction, sir," exclaimed the Captain of the Club, "but I cannot see by what right this fellow, Adderly, attempts to lecture me."

"Call me a fellow?" said Adderly, gnawing viciously at his nether lip.

"Yes, I do; a fellow! Is that straight enough?"

"If you repeat that," observed Round, "he'd be apt to go and commit *felo-de-se*. Se d'joke?"

"Don't, Punch!" replied Harry, in a tone of mild remonstrance; "this is a serious matter. It isn't the first time, as I had occasion to observe before, that I've been annoyed by this man."

"You're no gentleman!" exclaimed Adderly.

"Thank you!" answered Harry. "I presume you never were in the society of gentlemen before you came here, and, therefore, you are no judge."

"I despise you!" said Adderly.

"And I don't care a snap of my fingers for you," replied the Captain of the Club, swinging his hand in the air, and making his thumb and finger twang.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried Mr. Snapper, "this will not do at all. Pray cease this squabbling."

"Tell Adderly to be quiet, then," answered Harry.

"He was merely supporting my authority."

"Your authority, sir, must be very weak to require such support as his!"

"You are a low upstart!" exclaimed Adderly, growing bold, as he saw that he was backed by the professor, "and you travel on your muscle."

The Captain of the Club, very white in the face, demanded:

"May I be permitted to ask for an explanation of that remark?"

"Certainly! I am the son of a rich merchant—everybody knows that—while you are only the son of a poor widow, living in a small house in this town."

Harry Armstrong's pallor deepened, and a dead silence fell upon all.

Mastering his emotion as well as he could, Harry tried to speak, but a lump rose in his throat threatening to choke him.

He loved his mother dearly. His father, who had been a soldier in the United States army, fighting under General Scott in the Mexican war, and successively under McClellan, Meade and Grant in the civil conflict, he had laid away years ago in the churchyard.

It was true that the veteran had left his widow and children—for he had two sons—ill-provided for, but they had enough to live upon, and by denying herself the good lady contrived to place Harry at Dr. Smiley's.

His brother, Sam Armstrong, four years older than himself, had gone to California to seek his fortune, and they had not heard from him for some time.

Unable to speak through excess of feeling, Harry was able to act, and seizing a heavy dictionary which lay on his desk, he hurled it with all his force at Adderly.

The latter saw it coming and dodged it by lowering his head, so that the missile passed harmlessly over it.

At that moment, the door opened and Dr. Smiley appeared, leading by the hand a young man with dark hair and side-whiskers, dressed in a suit of shepherd's plaid, wearing a Derby hat on his head, and carrying a silver-mounted cane in his hand.

The dictionary struck this unfortunate individual on the head, knocking his hat off, and giving him confused ideas of things in general.

"Here! I say!" exclaimed he, with a pecu-

liarly English drawl, as he scrambled for his hat. "Who's—aw—throwing bricks at a fellah? It's—aw—very disagweable!"

The doctor frowned and, stepping forward, looked at his pupils, severely.

"Was that book directed at me?" he asked.

The Captain of the Club hastened to disabuse his mind of that idea.

"No, sir," he replied, promptly. "Adderly and I had a little trouble and I fired it at him."

"This is deplorable, Armstrong. Learn to moderate your transports."

"But I had provocation, sir!"

"Possibly, possibly," said the doctor, mildly; "yet you should not let your angry passions rise. Adderly, come hither and shake hands with Armstrong; let this end it."

"Certainly, sir, if you wish it," Adderly answered, submissively.

The Captain of the Club drew back proudly, and with an assumption of insolence, put his hands in his pockets.

"What does this mean?" inquired the doctor.

"You must excuse me, sir."

"How? You refuse to shake hands with Adderly? This does not show a Christian spirit."

"You must pardon me, if I refuse," replied Harry, "for I cannot be a hypocrite, and I feel sure you, sir, would be the last to wish to see me act such a despicable part."

"This is unfortunate," exclaimed the worthy doctor, as a shade of displeasure came over his benevolent face.

"I hate to offend you, doctor," continued Harry Armstrong, "but I have the heart of a man, and I cannot give the hand where the heart can never be!"

A murmur of applause greeted this frank and manly speech.

"Well, well, you must make up your differences, I suppose, in your own way," said Dr. Smiley, a little testily.

A dark scowl settled on Adderly's face as he resumed his seat.

"By Heaven!" he muttered, "he openly publishes me as his enemy, and he shall find that I am all which the word implies."

Public attention, now that the squabble between Armstrong and Adderly was over, concentrated itself on the new-comer—who had entered the room with the doctor.

This individual had ceased to rub his head, and was holding his hat in his hand, contemplating a deep indentation, which constituted the damage done to that article of wearing apparel, when it was so forcibly struck by the dictionary.

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed the doctor, "permit me to introduce to you a new companion, who has just arrived from England—Mr. Albert Fitzhugh—whose parents wish him to gain some knowledge of farming in the United States, with a view to his acquiring property in this country, and becoming a practical farmer. I have made arrangements with some of my neighbors which I trust will be of use to him, and for the immediate future he will take up his residence with us."

Armstrong advanced and held out his hand.

"As the oldest pupil here," he said, "and the Captain of the Mamaroneck Club, of which we shall hope to see you a member, allow me to welcome you!"

"Aw, yes; thanks! Glad to know you, you know. Like to join the club and all that sort of thing—aw, of course," replied Albert Fitzhugh, putting a small glass in his eye and staring at the young man.

Harry now told him his own name, and introduced him to all the rest, coming to Adderly last.

"Aw! man you throw books at! Yes—rather a good joke that! Aw—rather fun," remarked Fitzhugh.

The doctor looked at his watch.

"Nearly twelve," he said. "You can quit your studies at once; Armstrong, oblige me by taking Fitzhugh around and show him what there is to be seen."

"With pleasure, sir."

"And, don't forget that we dine at two, as you are sometimes inclined to do when you take it into your head to perform some of those extraordinary pedestrian feats, which have made you famous in athletic circles."

Harry smiled, and the doctor taking Mr. Snapper's arm quitted the room, leaving the boys to themselves.

"What do you fellows do here, aw?" asked Fitzhugh.

"Oh! we row in the spring and summer," replied Harry; "we walk and run and ride and gun; but of course at this time of the year it is rather dull."

"Ever have a paper chase—aw?" asked Fitzhugh. "Some fellows call it Hare and Hounds. You tear up a lot of paper, which you put into a couple of bags; two fellows—aw—are selected for Hares, and they have ten minutes' start across country; the Hounds follow the paper scent, and try to—aw—catch the Hares. It's rather fun."

Armstrong and the others thought this was a good idea, and as it had the charm of novelty about it, they received it with acclamation.

Presently Harry, Scofield and Fitzhugh went out for a walk, and after visiting the Mamaroneck boat-house, they strolled back to the town of Sweetwater, in which was a gymnasium. This had been built by a man who was known as Tuffun, the trainer. He had, in early life, been a prize-fighter, but when the ring fell into disuse he became an oarsman, winning many contests and making fame and money.

His gymnasium was the resort of all the youths in the town, and both the Mamaronecks and the Quinsagamonds were in the habit of meeting there to indulge in friendly trials of skill. Tuffun the trainer was a tall, well-built man of forty, dark and heavy looking, something like the wrestler in "As You Like It," but he was a good fellow, and a great favorite with the boys. When they entered he was performing some wonderful feats with heavy dumb-bells, and laboring as hard as Hercules when he cleansed the Augæan Stables, or slew the Nemean Hydra.

"Hello! Tuff!" exclaimed Armstrong; "what's new?"

"Good-day, sir! Same to you, gentlemen, replied Tuffun. "Mr. Goring, the Captain of the 'Quins' has been here to-day, and was blowing that there wasn't a man in the 'Necks' who could outwalk him, and I made bold enough to back you for a hundred dollars, to walk him a straight fifty miles, without a break, lap and lap, and beat him."

"Did you do that?"

"It's a fact, and you mustn't go back on me. It will take you from twelve to fifteen hours, but you've got to name the day and do it. I tell you, there isn't a man in the 'Quins' who can touch one side of the Captain of the Necks, and it's no use a-talking."

After some consideration, Armstrong accepted the challenge, naming that day week for the struggle, saying he would start at one o'clock in the morning, and also that he should go into training at once.

Goring, the Captain of the rival club, was no antagonist to be despised, for though Harry had always beaten him, he had given him all his work and ran him close.

Returning to the house in time for dinner, the conversation turned upon the proposed paper chase, which it was arranged should take place on the following Saturday.

Miss Smiley was charmed with the idea, as the boys had been.

"I will offer a prize," she said; "what shall it be?"

"An amethyst ring; I want one," suggested Round.

Every one laughed at this, for Punch was too fat to run far and had very little chance of distinguishing himself in the chase.

"I'm afraid, Punch, exclaimed the Captain of the Club," that you will come in where the cow's tail did—in the rear; but if Miss Smiley will allow me I should like to ask to whom she will give the prize? I mean to the leading Hare on the leading Hound?"

"What are you going to be?" inquired Tessy.

"Well, as far as we have arranged, at present, Moran and Tallman will be Hares; the rest of us Hounds."

"I think," said Tessy, "that it will be fairer to offer it to the Hounds. Yes, I will give the leading Hound—how odd it sounds to call any one a hound!—I will give a lovely amethyst ring. See, it is on my finger now."

She took a ring from her finger and handed it to Scofield, who was nearest her.

It was a stone of price, and beautifully set in rich, heavy gold, and as it was passed round the table every one admired it.

As they were leaving the room, after dinner, Adderly said to Fitzhugh—"She might as well have given it to Armstrong at once."

"I beg your—aw—pardon," replied Fitzhugh, distantly; "of whom did you speak?"

"Miss Smiley!" exclaimed Adderly, reddening.

"Aw—yes, thank you! It is customary in society to call a lady by her name. 'She' is a personal pronoun, as you are—aw—doubtless aware; but it would—aw—serve to designate the—aw—cat's mother, just as well as Miss Smiley." Then Fitzhugh, with a studied insolence which

only short-sightedness, real or assumed, would justify, put his glass in his eye and 'took stock' of Adderly, from head to foot, dwelling particularly on his boots, which were a size too large for him.

"I was only saying," continued Adderly, who was uneasy under this scrutiny, "that it is a dead sure thing for Armstrong, and I think it rather unfair."

"Can't you run, aw—?"

"Oh! yes, but I can't beat Armstrong, who is the Captain of the Club, and the champion athlete."

"Do you want a ring?" queried Fitzhugh.

"Yes; I should like to have one."

"Then, my deaw fellow," replied Fitzhugh, "there is only one thing I can advise you to do and that is, *buy one!*"

"Do you mean to insult me?" cried Adderly, angrily.

"Oh! no; only giving you a little friendly advice—aw. Save you no end of trouble, deaw boy!"

"Perhaps you don't know who I am?"

"Oh! yes; you're the man they shy books at," answered Fitzhugh, walking away.

Adderly was frantic with rage, and scarcely knew how to control his frenzy.

He would have dearly loved to fight with either Fitzhugh or Harry, but he was a coward, and fighting was not in his line of business at all.

Any time he would have preferred to give an enemy a stab in the dark; and as he retired to an arbor in the garden where he could light his cigar and be alone, he conspired with himself as to how he could revenge himself upon Armstrong, and at the same time get the ring.

He was by no means a bad runner, and he did not think there was a man in the Mamaroneck Club, excepting Harry, who could beat him.

Consequently, if the captain could be disabled or put out of the race, in some manner, he would have a chance of winning the prize, which he especially valued, because it was Tessy's, and would be bestowed upon the victor with her own fair hand.

What a moment of triumph that would be and how fiercely his heart would beat, when he stepped forward to receive the guerdon of his prowess!

He had just lighted his second cigar when the door of the summer-house or arbor was pushed open. Looking up he expected to see one of the boys, for it was a favorite place for them to come and read, a fire being kept in the stove, all day. The discipline at Dr. Smiley's was not strict, and the pupils could do very much as they liked, providing they did not neglect their work in too glaring a manner.

To his surprise he saw Mr. Snapper, who, with an oily smile, closed the door after him and bolted it.

"I thought you were here," he remarked, "and I came to have a quiet chat and a smoke with you."

Adderly pushed over his cigar-case, saying: "Help yourself. There is no one I want to see more than you, just now."

"And I need not say that I sympathize with you," replied Snapper. "Armstrong is carrying things with too high a hand, and he must be stopped."

"I'd like to know how to do it."

"This Englishman is another source of trouble," continued Snapper.

"I hate him most cordially!" cried Adderly.

"You don't hate him more than I do, my friend," continued the professor. "He has joined the Armstrong ring already. Only a few minutes ago he was dancing a breakdown in the school-room, and when I requested him not to indulge in any amateur gymnastics, he told me to mind my own business, and asked me how much I would take to go West."

"If I could only prevent Armstrong getting Tessy's ring," exclaimed Adderly.

Snapper reflected a moment.

"I'll tell you what to do," he said. "Take a walk into the town and see Goring, the Captain of the Quinsagamonds. Inform him of this new-fangled paper chase idea, which the Britisher has imported, and I'll undertake to say that he will devise some means of spoiling it."

"Do you think so?"

"Try it."

"I'll go at once, for I know I am sure to meet some of the 'Quins' at Tuffun's, in the afternoon."

After some further conversation, Adderly, instead of going to the school-room, took his departure for Sweetwater.

When half-way there, he met Fitzhugh, who was tramping along at the rate of four miles, easily enough.

"Hello! Al!" exclaimed Adderly, trying to be friendly, although hatred was burning in his heart.

Fitzhugh stopped, abruptly.

"Did you speak to me?" he inquired.

"Certainly; your name is Albert, I believe?"

"Did I ever give you permission to call me—Al, or in any way venture upon—aw—familiarity with me?"

"No; but—"

"I accept no excuse. You have been guilty of an impertinence—aw—which I choose to resent."

"You're high-toned, aren't you?" sneered Adderly, with a sickly attempt at a smile.

Fitzhugh turned upon his heel and continued his walk, while Adderly, flushed with a new annoyance, went on to the town on his dastardly errand.

When Fitzhugh reached the house, he found the young gentlemen engaged in their studies, which were directed by Dr. Smiley in person.

Taking a seat near Armstrong, he whispered: "I met Adderly going toward Sweetwater."

"Is that so?" responded Harry. "I wonder what takes him there?"

"No good," said Fitzhugh.

"You bet!" replied the Captain of the Club, who in vain tried to find a reason for his enemy's going to Sweetwater.

CHAPTER II.

THE PAPER CHASE AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

ADDERLY was not disappointed in his expectation of finding some of the Quinsagamond Club boys at Tuffun's gymnasium. Among them were Goring, the captain, and Shillito, one of the best men they had.

"Good-day, Sim!" exclaimed Goring. "Have you come to stretch your limbs on the flying trapeze?"

"I came out more for a walk than any thing else," replied Adderly. "Have you heard the news?"

"No; what is it?"

"We've got the best of you fellows, for we're going to have a Hare and Hounds club race on Saturday."

He explained all about the amusement, and gave those assembled full particulars of the forthcoming affair, even relating how Miss Smiley was going to present the leading Hound with a beautiful amethyst ring.

"That's splendid! I really think the 'Quins' will have to follow suit, and adopt that sport," said Goring.

"It would be good fun if some of you were to intercept the Hounds at a given point and get up a muss, so as to throw them off the scent," suggested Adderly.

He paused and looked round to see how his proposition was accepted, but to his infinite chagrin it was received with a dead silence.

"You don't seem to like the idea?" he added.

"No, thank you!" replied Goring. "I hope I'm a gentleman and above any dirty work of that sort."

"Oh! it was only a joke, on my part!" exclaimed Adderly, coloring up.

"Was it? I'm glad to hear it, for I was surprised at any thing of that sort coming from you!"

"Don't think seriously of it, for a moment."

"I will not, because I have a great respect for all the members of the Mamaronecks, and especially for the Captain of the Club. There is not a finer fellow than Armstrong in America to-day, and his brother was just like him."

"Certainly," replied Adderly, sheepishly.

"Three cheers for the Captain of the Club!" continued the generous and open-hearted Goring. "Hurrah! 'rah! 'rah!"

A very faint and feeble echo came from both Adderly and Shillito, who, as if by common consent, retired to a corner together and began to tumble over the horizontal bar.

"I noticed you did not respond very heartily to Goring's toast," said Adderly.

"Not I!" answered Shillito; "you ought to know that there is no love lost between Armstrong and myself."

A deep look of hatred and ungratified revenge came over his face, as he spoke.

Adderly laughed, harshly, and kept on laughing, as if enjoying an extremely funny joke.

"Confound you, Sim!" exclaimed Shillito; "what are you grinning at, like a caged monkey?"

"Harry did lick you, badly, that time, and how you ran, when you got away from him! Ha! ha! it was a sight to see you get over the ground!"

Shillito ground his teeth, savagely.

"Never mind," he remarked; "I'll get square with him, some day."

"Will you?" cried Adderly, sharply.

"Yes, sir! I never forget or forgive an injury."

"Now's your time!"

"How?"

"I'll tell you," said Adderly, balancing himself on the horizontal bar and bending down his head to Shillito, who was below him; "Armstrong has made up his mind that he will have this ring of Miss Smiley's, and I don't see anything to prevent him, unless—" and he paused.

"What?" demanded Shillito.

"You interfere!"

"My dear fellow, what on earth can I do?"

"Everything; you know the Four Corners about six miles from here?"

"Very well indeed!" replied Shillito.

"The Hares are coming home that way, and will finish up at Round Brook. If they are not caught before they get there, they will win. Now I reckon that Harry will be close up with them at the Corners. If you meet him there, and pick a quarrel with him, I and others will have a show, because he will be delayed."

"I see!" responded Shillito. "What time do you start?"

"At eleven sharp, on Saturday."

"Then I am to be at the Corners, about twelve?"

"Exactly! Will you do it?"

"I will!"

Adderly held out his hand, which was cordially clasped by Shillito. The bargain was made, and it was clear that Harry would have more trouble in getting the ring than he imagined. We may briefly explain the reason why Shillito hated Armstrong so deeply.

About a year before, two small boys were going home with a bag of apples which had been given them as a present for their mother and father.

Shillito met them and took away the apples, which caused them great distress, in the midst of which Armstrong came along the same road, and inquiring the reason of their trouble ordered Shillito to restore the stolen property, and on his refusing to do so, thrashed him severely, calling him a coward and a sneak thief for what he had done.

This, to Shillito's mind—which was of the same calibre as Adderly's—was an injury, and he could not forget it.

After making all his arrangements, Adderly went home, and it was noticeable that he then and there went into strict training, as if for an important race.

He knocked off tobacco, eat raw meat, drank milk and took long spins in the country to improve his wind and test his staying powers.

Saturday approached rapidly and excitement ran high. I cannot say how many old books were torn up to make paper, but every one contributed something, if only a novel, or an aged Latin grammar. There was considerable betting on the result, it being generally conceded that Armstrong was in such excellent condition and showing such good form that he could not fail to win the ring, by heading the pack and perhaps by catching the Hares themselves.

Miss Smiley made no secret of her liking for Harry, but she said nothing about her wish that he might win the ring, as that would have looked like favoritism.

The young gentlemen had the privilege at all times of going into the doctor's parlor, and they frequently availed themselves of the permission for he had an excellent and admirably selected stock of books, as well as a good piano and plenty of music.

Harry sang and played, which taste made him a constant visitor in the parlor. Miss Smiley was a cultivated musician and they sung and played together.

On the evening preceding the race, Harry sought the parlor and found Tessy reading a book.

"Good-evening!" she exclaimed. "I suppose you feel confident of winning, to-morrow?"

"Why should I not?" he replied. "I know that my net is big enough for my fish."

"But, you haven't trained the least little bit, you naughty boy!"

"I know it, yet I never felt in better condition or more fit."

"Adderly is out every day, and he means to run you hard," said Tessy. "Oh, how mad I should get if he were to beat you! It would be really quite too awfully awful!"

"No fear of that!" replied Harry.

"You once asked me to give you this ring, do you remember?"

"I do, perfectly well."

"And I refused?"

"You did. Let me tell you how it all happened," said Harry; "for it is impressed on my memory as if it had been printed there. It was in the sweet spring time. The trees were covered with green leaves; the sun was shining brightly and the birds sung their merriest songs."

"How poetical you are!"

"Why should I not be? It was a time and scene to inspire the highest thoughts. You and I were walking in the country, when suddenly you discovered that you had dropped your ring. I went back along the road and found it. Then I begged that I might keep it, but you, hard-hearted and cruel that you were, refused to let me do it."

"It was my caprice," replied Tessy; "but now I am like a fair ladye of ye olden time, and I tell you to come into the lists and prove your prowess in the sight of all."

"These are not the days of chivalry, yet I'll do it."

"The ring shall be your reward, my *preux chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*; but mind one thing, my dear Mr. Modern Bayard—if you expose me to the mortification of having to present the ring to Adderly, or that somewhat self-sufficient Englishman, Mr. Fitzhugh, I will not speak to you again for a long time, and I shall come near hating you, because I shall be compelled to despise you."

"If I am beaten at long-distance running," answered Harry, "I shall no longer desire to be the Captain of the Club; so set your mind at rest, fair ladye; I will win your guerdon or—"

"Don't promise anything rash. I won't be too hard on you, and really you are too young to commit suicide, and it would spoil your prospects in life to run away to sea or enlist in the army," interrupted Tessy, with a merry laugh.

"What a tease you are!" said Harry Armstrong.

"It is one of the privileges of my sex, and I believe I excel in the art of teasing."

"Far be it from me to deny it."

"Come," she exclaimed, "let us have some music. I will sing the 'Lullaby' if you will kindly play the accompaniment."

The evening passed agreeably, to both of them, for they were in love with one another without knowing it.

If Harry had suggested such a thing as an engagement with an ultimate view to marriage to Tessy, that young lady would have laughed heartily, and as for Harry, why, he simply thought her much too beautiful and good for him, but he nevertheless adored her in a quiet and silent way.

At the appointed hour, next day, the Hares started with their bags of paper slung over their shoulders, and Mr. Snapper, watch in hand, waited to give the Hounds the word to go.

When the amount of "grace" they were allowed had elapsed he shut his chronometer, and cried—"Off you go!"

Harry Armstrong went off at a steady pace, leaving the others to make the running for the first few miles, knowing his own ability to cut them down whenever he wanted.

There was little or no wind, and the scent—that is to say the paper—laid well, there being no difficulty in finding the course the Hares had taken.

After a couple of miles had been traversed, Harry, who was the last in the hunt, was overtaken by Miss Smiley, who was on horseback.

He immediately stopped, and walked by her side!

"How easily you are taking it!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; I haven't started in yet, he replied.

"Why not?"

"Oh! I want to give them other fellows a chance to pump themselves out."

"I can't see any of them."

"Not having telescopic eyes, I don't suppose you can, but if you like to canter, we will soon overtake them."

Tessy touched her horse lightly with the whip, and the well-bred creature immediately bounded forward, but Harry, who had braced himself for a serious effort was not far behind.

In ten minutes they had overtaken Round, to whom Harry waved his hand.

"How much for the 'round' trip, Punch?" he asked.

"It isn't a square deal!" declared Round; I'm going home, for I find I'm too heavily handicapped by nature, and have too much to carry."

In half an hour, Hardacre and Scotield were passed and Fitzhugh was only a field ahead.

Presently Fitzhugh sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree and lighted a cigar.

"All broke up, eh?" asked Harry, as he came up with him.

"I've given out—aw—" was the reply, in a broken-winded whisper. "Fact is—aw—I'm out of condition you know, and the ground is—aw—infernally heavy! Spin along—aw—old fellah! Wish you luck, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Shall I lead you any further," asked Tessy, "or shall I stay by Mr. Fitzhugh and comfort him for his break-down?"

"By all means stay with Fitzhugh!" replied Harry.

"Thanks; quite an oasis in my desert. Hope you don't object to the weed, Miss Smiley?"

"Not at all; I rather like it."

"Well, I'm off. It's business now!" exclaimed Harry.

They both gave him an encouraging smile and away he went like an arrow from a bow, as fresh as a daisy and as right as the mail.

"Doosed fine runner, 'pon my word! Perfect kind of athlete, you know," remarked Fitzhugh; "got the old country style down fine, by Jove—aw!"

"Don't you suppose that we can do any thing here as well as you can in England, Mr. Fitzhugh?" asked Tessy.

"Well—aw—I must say you're picking up fast. I thought you could only kill buffaloes and grow corn, but I find I'm mistaken, you know—aw."

"Oh! those dreadful buffaloes! They and the Indians always seem to sit like a nightmare on your countrymen," answered Tessy, with one of her merry laughs.

"Oh! by Jove, you're too severe; really—aw—you're too hard on a fellah, you are, indeed, you know!" protested Fitzhugh.

While this conversation was taking place, the Captain of the Club had been rapidly gaining on Adderly, who was now the leading Hound.

He could see him afar off, with lowered head, watching the trail and running in fine style.

Adderly looked over his shoulder, and perceiving Harry, slackened his pace a little, as if preparing for a supreme effort and wishful to breathe in anticipation of the struggle.

"Ha!" muttered Harry. "He either weakens, or he is playing 'possum. I can't tell which yet; but I will soon find out."

Rushing along like a whirlwind, and bounding over the grass like a deer, Harry overtook his enemy in less than three minutes.

They were nearing the Four Corners.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Harry Armstrong, "let her out and show us what you are made of!"

Adderly did not waste any breath, but he accepted the challenge, and for the next mile they ran at a smart pace, neck and neck, neither having at any time more than a foot or two the advantage of the other.

At length Harry's superior power and stride told on his opponent, who began to fall behind.

Still running well within himself, Harry made a spurt and lengthened the gap, so that when he came to the Four Corners Adderly was out of sight.

Reaching the road, which here had four forks or crossings, he looked in vain for the papers!

What could have become of the scent? It had been laid regularly up to this point, and there was no difficulty in following it. Most provoking was it to have to cast about and to lose time in finding it.

Looking up one of the roads, he saw a young man busily engaged in picking up the pieces of paper!

It was Shillito, whom he at once recognized.

"Say, Shillito, what in the world are you doing?" he exclaimed.

"Amusing myself, as you see," was the reply.

"But you have no right to pick up those pieces of paper."

"I pick them up, nevertheless."

"What for?"

"Perhaps I'm going into the junk business, and every unconsidered trifle in the way of paper is valuable to me. Anyway, I can't see how it concerns you."

"Don't you know the Mamaronecks are having a paper chase and that is the scent?"

"I don't know anything about it, and don't want to know."

"Don't you? Then I'll have to enlighten your ignorance and lick you as I did once before."

"Come and try!"

Harry rushed upon Shillito, who stood up before him and a fight began, which went on with varying fortune for some time, Shillito being

knocked down repeatedly, but always coming up again.

He was being beaten badly, but he fought pluckily, doing all he could to gain time.

While the fight was going on, Adderly passed them at a sweeping pace, but such was Harry's anxiety to teach his opponent a lesson, that he forgot all about the ring.

It was fully ten minutes before Shillito, with both eyes nearly closed, his nose bleeding, and his lips cut badly, acknowledged that he had had enough.

That ten minutes was fatal to Harry Armstrong.

"I give in! You're best man!" cried Shillito.

"Don't you interfere with the 'Necks' again, or you'll get worse than I've just given you," replied Harry.

"Get along! I guess you're through with me."

Harry took no further notice, but bounded along with the speed of the wind, hoping to make up for lost time.

He might have done so, had not the Hares themselves been exhausted.

They slackened up about two miles from the Four Corners and Adderly caught them easily, Armstrong coming in a good second.

It was with difficulty he could conceal his vexation.

"Hello, Harry!" exclaimed Dan Moran, "what is the matter with you? Adderly is first Hound!"

"I stopped to fight Shillito of the 'Quins,' and I gave him a sound thrashing for spoiling the scent," replied Harry.

"You shouldn't let your angry passions rise," said Tom Tallman, the other Hare.

"The pace was a 'clipper!'" remarked Adderly. "I didn't think I could stand it, when Armstrong forced the running."

"You didn't win fairly," Harry declared.

"Didn't I? Let me appeal to Moran and Tallman."

"Oh! yes. It was as square as it could be; we have nothing to do with you and Shillito. Adderly caught us and was three minutes ahead of you, by my watch. I timed it. Oh! indeed, he won fairly enough."

Harry Armstrong remembered what Tessy had said to him and how he had boasted of his prowess, and he turned away biting his lip with sheer mortification.

The ring would be Adderly's and there was no help for it.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW TEST.

THE Captain of the Club was roused by a sharp tap on the shoulder and instantly awoke from his miserable reverie.

It was Adderly who had touched him.

"I want you to take that back, Armstrong," said the latter.

"To what do you allude?"

"You said, openly, that I did not win fairly, and both Tallman and Dan Moran have contradicted you. I owe it to myself that my record should not be questioned."

"I suppose I spoke hastily," answered Harry, with his usual frankness: "what I ought to have said was that I could have come in an easy first, if it had not been for that unfortunate affair with Shillito."

"I am satisfied."

"Will you allow me to take advantage of that mistake and waive your claim to the first place?"

Adderly laughed in his face.

"What do you take me for?" he demanded.

"Well, you know my opinion of you," said Harry, bluntly, "and I am not going to take any pains to disguise it, even now, but I know that I would not claim the ring, if I were you, under the circumstances."

"Oh! it is the ring you are after!"

"I don't deny it!"

"Well, you see, you are not me, and I don't propose to give up my right to the ring."

"I'll buy it from you."

"Armstrong!" exclaimed Adderly, who enjoyed his triumph, "you haven't money enough to buy that ring!"

"You won't sell it? I'll give you—"

"Oh! pshaw! I would not sell it for a million, and that settles it. You seem to forget that my folks are as rich as yours are poor; and, moreover, it is not the money value of the ring that I esteem it for."

"What then?"

"I prize it because it is Miss Smiley's; and will soon be mine. Of course we all understand that you are smitten in that quarter."

"I?" stammered Harry.

"You needn't blush. When she offered the ring as a prize to the first Hound, it was only another way of giving it to you, but you didn't get it, did you?" said Adderly, with a sneer.

"No, I didn't."

"Well, I am vain enough to think it will look just as well on my finger as on yours."

Armstrong saw that he was only wasting his breath in talking to Adderly, and he wended his way sadly homeward, nearly heart-broken at his ill-success.

He had realized the truth of the old saying: "That there is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip."

Oh! how he blamed himself for indulging his hasty temper. If it had not been for that, his present annoyance would not have occurred.

In future, he determined that he would have more command over himself.

"My wretched temper is always getting me in trouble," he murmured. "What will Tessy say to me? I know she would rather throw the ring in the Harlem river than give it to Adderly."

He was nearing home, when he heard voices, and looking ahead, saw Fitzhugh walking by the side of Miss Smiley, who was still riding her favorite horse.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tessy. "Here is our hero, the Captain of the Club! Did you win easily, Harry?"

He shook his head; his emotion was so great that for a moment he could not speak.

"Who came in second?" inquired Fitzhugh.

Harry recovered himself by the exercise of a great effort.

"I did," he replied in a muffled voice.

They both regarded him incredulously.

"Am I not to give you the ring?" asked Miss Smiley, a shade of displeasure crossing her face.

"No indeed!"

"Who is the lucky man?"

"Adderly!"

Miss Smiley at hearing this, struck her horse a sharp blow with her whip, which made it curve and prance, rearing up on its hind legs in a way which would have unseated a less skillful rider.

"Let me explain how it all happened," said Harry. "If it had not been for Shillito of the Quinsagamonds—"

"Pray, don't trouble yourself, Mr. Armstrong," interrupted Miss Smiley. "No explanation is necessary. The mere fact of your having been beaten in the race is quite sufficient. I don't want to hear any thing more. Mr. Fitzhugh, excuse me; I wish to get home."

Fitzhugh bowed, and the young lady, with a heightened color, cantered off.

The tears came involuntarily to Armstrong's eyes, and he turned round to hide this proof of weakness from Fitzhugh.

"She was rather rough on you, old man," remarked the latter, "but I wouldn't be cut up if I was you."

"You don't know how I feel," replied Harry.

"Tell us all about it—aw—I imagine you could have won in a walk, if something had not happened—aw."

Harry related exactly what had happened and the Englishman was much interested in the recital.

"Didn't it strike you as being somewhat—aw—odd, old fellah," he remarked, "that this man Shillito should be picking up paper at the—aw—Four Corners, just as you were—aw—coming by?"

"I didn't think of that; but it is singular."

"Have you—aw—fawgotten that I met this—aw—lad, Shillito, on the road to Sweetwater yesterday?"

"That's so!"

"By Jove, old man, if we could prove that he was seen talking to Shillito in the afternoon, it would—aw—look like a conspiracy," said Fitzhugh, in his deliberate way.

This view of the case was so feasible that Harry grasped the hand of the hard-headed Britisher, and shook it warmly.

"I'm very much indebted to you for the idea, and I'll work it up," said he. "If—"

He paused abruptly and was plunged into deep thought.

"If," he continued after a few moments' reflection, "you could induce Miss Smiley to withhold the ring for a day or two, say until Monday, we might be able to accomplish something."

"I'll try my best—aw," replied Fitzhugh.

"It is not often that I put myself out of the way for a fellah, but I like you—aw—just as much as I don't cotton to that man—what's his name—man you shy books at, you know; Snakeley, isn't it?"

"Adderly."

"Same thing; good deal of the—aw—slimy reptile about him."

By this time they had reached the house and both went to their rooms to change and enjoy the luxury of a bath after their exertions.

When their ablutions were completed, Fitzhugh went to the parlor and had an interview with Miss Smiley, to whom he related the cause of Harry's defeat, and she generously consented to defer the presentation of the ring until the following Monday.

Harry anxiously awaited the result of this interview, and when he heard it, he was vastly pleased, his pleasure being increased when the announcement was made at supper-time by Miss Smiley herself.

After supper, Harry walked over to Sweetwater and strolled into the gymnasium, where, as usual, especially on a Saturday night, there was a crowd of the rising young athletes of the place.

Tuffin, the trainer, was delighted to see him especially as Goring was present, and the walking-match he had arranged could be ratified in all its details.

"Good-day, Cap!" he exclaimed, coming up to Harry, who was at once the observed of all observers, and the center of admiration for the younger patrons of the gymnasium.

"How are you, Armstrong," said Goring, at the same time.

"A little under the weather," replied Harry.

"Good lands!" cried Tuffin; "don't say that. Recollect that I stand to lose on you, if you go wrong."

"Oh! I'm all right, as far as that is concerned," said Harry, with a careless laugh. "I'll win your money for you, Tuffy."

He took up a shot, which weighed a hundred and twelve pounds, and threw it over his shoulder—a feat that few could accomplish—a hundred weight not being an easy thing to handle.

"Don't make too sure of that," observed Goring.

"Oh! I'm not blowing," answered Harry. "You know me too well for that, Goring. I only meant to convey to this obtuse individual that I would do my best to win for him."

"Of course; but I hear Sim Adderly beat you in the paper chase to-day."

"Who told you so?"

"Oh! I heard it. These things get about, you know," replied Goring, carelessly.

"If it hadn't been for a member of the Quinsagamonds," said Harry, "you would not be able to make that remark."

"Indeed? What do you mean? I don't like anything that savors of a reflection on the Quins. Understand me rightly, Armstrong. This is nothing personal to you, but I am just as proud of my club as you are of yours. Perhaps you will kindly explain."

"With pleasure. I understand that Adderly was in the village yesterday."

"He was. I saw him myself, and he was afterward talking to Shillito."

Harry now told Goring how Shillito had provoked him by removing the paper scent, and how his behavior brought on the fight that occasioned the delay which made him lose the race.

Goring looked very grave, indeed, at hearing this news, which he did not like at all, as it threw a grave suspicion on a member of the Quinsagamond Club.

"Now, I must tell you something," he exclaimed.

"What is it?"

"It bears singularly upon your story. When Sim Adderly was here yesterday, he had the audacity to ask me to spoil your hunt, and when I indignantly refused he laughed the thing off and said it was only a joke."

"He asked you to spoil the hunt?"

"Indeed he did! And, another thing—when I saw Shillito this afternoon, and asked him who had been beating him, he told me that he had a fall out with a tramp who asked him for money and got cheeky when he wouldn't give him any; but here is Shillito. This matter must be investigated."

Shillito at this moment entered the gymnasium and would have withdrawn, on seeing Armstrong, had not Goring called him by name.

He approached with an anxious, nervous air, which showed that he was ill at ease.

Tuffin the trainer had heard the whole of the conversation which passed between the young captains, and he was much interested in it.

"What do you want with me?" inquired Shillito.

"Simply to ask what took you to the Four Corners this morning and induced you to remove

the scent of the Mamaronecks' Hare and Hounds race?"

"Oh! nothing particular," replied Shillito.

"I want a more explicit answer than that."

"Do you? Then you won't get it. I don't recognize your right to question me."

"I do it because I am the captain of a club which I have a very strong suspicion that you have disgraced."

"How dare you use that language to me?" demanded Shillito, firing up; "you can't prove anything against me."

Seeing he had made a mistake in saying so much, he checked himself, and after a pause added—"Anyway, what do you accuse me of?"

"I will tell you," exclaimed Armstrong boldly.

"Oh! you are my accuser? I expected as much, for I knew that Goring and I were too old friends for him to say anything against me, unless he had been prejudiced by some one. That explains the whole thing. I knew he had been inspired; let me hear the indictment."

"It is simple enough: I accuse you of conspiring with Adderly to make me lose time in the hunt to-day."

"And I deny it."

Goring shrugged his shoulders.

"That raises an issue, he said, which I am afraid a Philadelphia lawyer could not satisfactorily settle, unless you can produce proof, Armstrong."

"But every thing points to a conspiracy, don't it?"

"Yes; only circumstantial evidence of that kind cannot convict a man," said Goring.

At this juncture a boy who was employed in the gymnasium by Tuffin the trainer, was seen making signs to Armstrong. He was almost a dwarf, being strangely stunted in his growth, and having a slight hunch in his back, from being dropped by a nurse when he was young; his appearance was the reverse of handsome.

The boys had given him the name of Queersticks, because in addition to his other physical peculiarities, his legs were slightly bandy.

"Get out of here!" cried Shillito, "you lump of deformity! thought I warned you not to hang around me."

"I'm engaged here by Mr. Tuffin," replied Queersticks, "and when he bounces me, I'll go, but I sha'n't move for the likes of you."

Shillito made a grab at him, catching him by the arm and gave him a blow under the ear, which sent him reeling like a teetotum.

"Don't be a coward!" exclaimed Armstrong; hit a man of your own size and let that poor creature alone. He is deformed and that ought to be sufficient to induce you to keep your hands off him."

"I do what I choose!" replied Shillito, "and I don't ask you to be my friend, philosopher and guide."

Queersticks stopped his gyrations and holding up his hand threateningly said—"I'll fix you for this."

"Oh! pshaw!" answered Shillito contemptuously; "give me a rest."

"Mr. Armstrong," continued Queersticks, "I was in here yesterday when Mr. Adderly of the 'Necks' was talkin' to this Mr. Shillito and they didn't see me, because I was back of them, and they were fixing how to make you lose to-day, and Shillito he says—"

Shillito interrupted him fiercely.

"That's a downright lie!" he cried.

"Hold on!" said Goring; "give the lad fair play and let us hear what he has to say."

"I'll strangle the life out of him."

"No you won't," exclaimed Armstrong, "not while I am here. Go on, my lad."

"Well, sir, it was settled, that Shillito was to go to the Four Corners and stop your running, so that Adderly could come in first and win a ring, that some one was to give the leading Hound."

"Good enough!" said Goring; "I think that revelation settles your membership in the Quinsagamond Club, Mr. Shillito, if I have anything to say in the matter."

Shillito's rage knew no bounds. He declared that Queersticks had been bribed to say what he did, and became so violent that at last Goring took him by the arm and put him out of the gymnasium.

It need not be said that Armstrong was delighted at this unexpected triumph over his enemies.

Goring promised to come up to Dr. Smiley's and tell him all that had happened, feeling sure that Tessy would now give the ring to the one who really deserved it.

Nothing, however, was known until Monday. He was aware that Goring had visited Dr.

and Miss Smiley, and he hoped for the best, but it was not until breakfast time that he heard anything definite.

Then Dr. Smiley made a speech which did not reflect very well upon the character of Adderly, for he related the whole story, as it had occurred.

"Gentlemen?" he said in conclusion, "on consideration of the facts, my daughter has decided to give the ring to the person who is entitled to it, and I leave it to you to name him."

"Armstrong, the Captain of the Club!" cried every one.

"Precisely!" replied the doctor, smiling benignantly over his spectacles.

Amid great applause, Tessy rose, and taking the ring off her finger placed it before Harry.

"It is yours," she said. "Pray accept it with my best wishes."

Harry bowed; he could not say anything, for his heart was just then too full for utterance.

"It remains for Mr. Adderly," said the doctor, "to do that which he thinks most fitting."

Adderly was pale as death, but he showed no signs of agitation.

"I shall leave your house, sir, in half an hour," he replied; "for I look upon the whole affair as a farce, and think I have been most unjustly treated, for the gratification of your favorite."

"Meaning me?" asked Harry.

"Yes, you!"

"Well, in this case, I accept the term 'favorite,' and consider it an honor."

Adderly rose from the table and retired amid a general hiss, which did not tend to improve his temper, that being already sadly demoralized.

He had not far to go, as his father had a magnificent mansion a few minutes' walk from the Sweetwater depot, on the Harlem railroad, but as he left the house he shook his fist at it and hissed through his clinched teeth—"This is the worst day's work you ever did, Harry Armstrong!"

In a few days his absence was forgotten, and the attention of the Mamaronecks was concentrated on the walking match between their Captain and Goring, the leader of the Quinsagamonds.

Tessy asked Harry as a favor to wear her colors, which were blue and white; he was only too pleased to be honored by such a request.

"I am sure you will carry them to the fore," she said.

"If it is in the power of mortal man to do it, I will," he replied.

The time appointed for the match arrived and both men came to the scratch in perfect condition, Tuffin having personally superintended the training of Armstrong.

It was a terrible effort of endurance, for only the really strong in mind and body can walk fifty miles at a stretch. The competitors started at midnight and by nine o'clock the next morning, Harry had covered thirty-two miles, Goring being five miles behind.

The result was that Harry won easily, and was acknowledged to be the champion of that section of the country.

Tuffin, the trainer, was enthusiastic in his praise, and declared that he was willing to back him for a six days' walk against time, no matter who the man was.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SILVER CUP RACE.

WHEN Harry had recovered from the fatigue of his walk he received a notification from Tuffin that a stranger in the town had offered a prize for a single scull race in shells. The prize was a handsome solid silver cup and it was open to all comers, the stranger reserving to himself the right to enter for it.

No sooner had Harry heard this than he went down to the gymnasium and saw the trainer.

"What is this I hear about a cup to be rowed for?" he asked.

"It's all right, sir," replied Tuffin; "I've got the cup in my office. It has just come down from Tiffany's and a beauty it is. Worth all of three hundred dollars, splendidly chased and having a space for the victor's name surmounted by a pair of gold oars and a laurel leaf. Come and see it."

Armstrong accompanied the trainer to his office, and looked at the cup, which was in reality worthy of all the praise that had been bestowed upon it.

"I'd like to own that," said Harry, regarding it admiringly.

"There is no doubt but you can," replied Tuffin; "always provided that the stranger himself does not enter."

"Why? Is he so formidable?"

"He's got a frame like iron. There is not a superfluous ounce of flesh on his bones. I never saw such a stammerer. He can lift weights that I cannot touch."

"What club does he belong to? The Argonauts?"

"No club at all. He is a stranger, I tell you," replied Tuffin.

"Did you ever see him before?"

"Never. He lives at a New York hotel, and says his wish is to encourage sport on the Harlem river; the weather is exceptionally fine and open for the time of year, and he wants the race rowed this day fortnight."

"What is his name?"

"Captain Far-West, he calls himself."

"Far-West?" repeated Harry. "That must be an assumed name."

"So I think, sir."

"Have you received any entries for the race yet?"

"You bet I have!" replied Tuffin. "Look at here!"

He opened his desk and displayed a sheet of foolscap, on which were inscribed about a dozen names.

Taking up a pen, Harry wrote:

"Harry Armstrong, Captain Mamaroneck Athletic Club."

"That will count me in," he said. "I see Goring has entered, and Shillito, and—yes—that fellow, Adderly, has had the assurance to put his name down."

"Oh! you couldn't kill him, sir!" exclaimed the trainer. "He doesn't belong to the crowd that dies easily."

"This race will have to be rowed in heats," said Harry.

"I guess so."

"Will Mr. Far-West be here soon?"

"Not before the day of the race," answered the trainer; "but he said he would telegraph before the time for closing the entries, to say whether he would row or not."

"Surely, he does not want to win his own cup," said Harry.

"Oh, no! I forgot to explain that he told me to say that if he rowed and if he won, he should present the cup to the second man."

"All right!" exclaimed Harry. "I'll see if I cannot take that cup home as an ornament for Dr. Smiley's sideboard, and I'll take a walk to the boat-house. I haven't had a spin on the river this year."

The weather was mild and genial, almost like spring, and the water seemed to tempt one to row on its silvery bosom. Harry got out his shell, and going up with the stream to High Bridge, made such time as convinced him that his hands had not lost their cunning.

The weather continued all that could be desired, and although it was a little chilly at times, rowing was quite enjoyable.

On the night before the race the members of the Mamaroneck and the Quinsagamond Clubs, with a few enterprising stragglers from other rowing associations, who were well known sport hunters, and never neglected to enter for a race, if there was a chance of getting anything, assembled at the gymnasium.

So large were the entries that it was decided to row the race in five heats, with a sixth or final heat to decide the contest. Tuffin exhibited a telegram from Captain Far-West informing him that the patron had decided to row.

The heats were drawn for and arranged, and everything was settled for the morrow.

Harry walked home with Fitzhugh, who had also entered.

"I'm glad," remarked Harry, "that this mysterious stranger is not in my heat."

"He's in mine, though," replied Fitzhugh, "and—aw—I shall polish him off. I don't want to brag, but I flatter myself I know how to row—aw. You see I'm an Oxford man, to start with, and that is saying something."

"Certainly!" replied Harry, politely.

"You see you fellows haven't got the style or the stroke. It's all very well—aw—to talk about the 'git that' stroke, but when you've plowed the water for two miles and don't get there, how do you feel—aw?"

"Pretty bad, I should think!"

"I rather—aw—think I shall win this race," continued Fitzhugh, with a sublime confidence which made Harry smile.

"If my individual chance was out of the question, I might echo your wish," answered Harry. "But as things are at present, I must confess that I am selfish enough to hope that I may keep at the head of the river."

"Are you such a great swell as all that?"

"They call me the Terror of the Harlem," replied Harry, smiling again.

"By Jove, you know," said Fitzhugh, "I shall have all my work cut out for me."

They now reached Doctor Smiley's, and found Tessy sitting up in the parlor.

She met them in the hall, and pinned her colors on Harry's coat.

"Will you wear them for me?" she asked.

"Will I not?" he replied radiantly.

The following day the Harlem was gay with boats and bunting.

Harry Armstrong won his heat easily, and as it was the first he had ample breathing time to observe the rest.

The second was won by Goring, the third by Adderly, the fourth by Shillito, and the fifth by the stranger, who called himself Captain Far-West.

While the fifth heat was being rowed, Harry watched the stranger carefully.

He was a young man about the middle height, as strong as a lion and a splendid oarsman. He seemed to play with his competitors until near the finish, when he put out his strength and shot ahead like a meteor.

Fitzhugh was a bad second; he had rowed prettily enough and had led for some distance, but when Captain Far-West meant business he was cut down in an instant.

Fitzhugh met Harry in the boat-house and seemed much chagrined at his defeat.

"By Jove, you know," he said, "that fellow's wonder; never saw a man—aw—put the—aw—boat through the water in the way he did. She fairly flew—aw."

"There is only one fellow who could row a boat like that," replied Harry.

"Who is that—aw?"

"My brother Sam; but he is away in California, or dead perhaps; we haven't heard from him in a long while."

The stranger was a very quiet, reserved sort of man, who did not seek to make the acquaintance of any one, contenting himself with speaking to Tuffin, and giving directions for the final heat.

He had a bronzed countenance, which showed signs of trouble and hard work; his whiskers and beard were black and bushy and his hands as hard and horny as if he had handled a shovel all his life.

It was about four o'clock when those who had to row off the heats got into their shells and paddled to their stations. The first to start was Goring, the second Adderly, the third Shillito, the fourth Armstrong, and last of all the stranger. They had to row a course of two miles, turning, half-way, round a stake boat, and home again.

Tuffin the trainer started them to a "bee line go!" and they all shot off together—Harry taking the lead and keeping it.

At the turn, the Captain of the Club saw that Captain Far-West was within a few yards of him, Goring being behind, Adderly fourth and Shillito fifth.

"Now for the race!" muttered Harry, who was rowing well within himself, as he saw it would be between him and the unknown.

The wind and tide were against him, and his boat rolled a little, but he determined to keep the lead he had, if it broke his heart to do so.

Seldom has such rowing been seen on the Harlem or any other river as was exhibited in that race on the home stretch.

Away flew the boats like things of life, the oars rising and falling with the regularity of machinery, but the stranger was gradually gaining all the time.

When they were within twenty yards of home they were neck and neck and the plaudits of those on shore rung in their ears, stimulating each to further exertion.

The stranger was rowing in such splendid style that Harry felt he was beaten, and he was not surprised when his opponent's boat shot ahead of his.

Yet his surprise increased when, within six yards of the waiting line, the stranger slackened up and allowed him to come in a winner by about a foot and a half.

Easing up they paddled to the shore, and were vigorously cheered.

"Well rowed, my boy!" exclaimed Captain Far-West. "You have beaten me by so little that I do not consider it a disgrace."

"Thank you!" replied Harry; "but, if you will allow me to say so, you have made me a present of the cup."

"It was yours, anyway, by the terms of the race, if you had come in second."

"You were too kind to me," replied Harry, "and I must say that I never saw any one row like you except my brother, Sam. You might have met him in California? Sam Armstrong;

he was engaged in mining the last mother heard of him."

The stranger shook his head.

"No," he said; "I never had the pleasure of meeting a gentleman of that name."

He rowed his boat to the raft and sprung ashore, this being the last that Harry saw of him, as he depred the trainer to present the cup to the winner.

Harry felt that he had beaten every one fairly except Captain Far-West, who could at the last moment have won easily if he had been less generous.

The cup was filled with champagne and every one drank to the health of the Captain of the Club, but he felt that he did not really deserve these honors.

They sung, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!" and the gymnasium was a place of rejoicing, only Adderly and Shillito being absent.

Harry's health was proposed and received with acclamation, he returning thanks in a neat little speech which brought redoubled applause.

In the moment of his triumph, Queersticks, the attendant in the gymnasium, touched his elbow.

"I don't want to disturb you, sir," he said, "but I was passing your mother's house just now, and she asked me would I be good enough to tell you that she wanted to see you particularly."

"Right away?" inquired Harry.

"Yes, sir; without delay," replied Queersticks.

Harry had not seen his mother for more than a week, and fearing she was ill, he made some excuse to his companions and started at once for her house, which was situated in the center of the town.

He could not help feeling that something was wrong, because if his mother wanted to see him, it was only a short walk or drive to Dr. Smiley's.

With a throbbing heart he neared the old homestead which, with a moderate income in the shape of a life annuity, was all that his father had been able to leave his mother.

CHAPTER V.

BAD NEWS—THE SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

The house in question was a pretty frame house, standing in its own grounds, which were adorned with flower-beds and shrubs and studded with fine trees.

Inside, the furniture was substantial, if not elegant, and there were a number of articles, such as books, vases and pictures, which Mrs. Armstrong regarded as relics.

Harry walked up the familiar path and opened the door, finding his mother in the parlor.

The old lady's eyes were moist with recent tears, and her face, which yet preserved traces of former beauty, showed signs of trouble.

"I won the race, mother, and if you wish it, you shall have the silver cup. If not, I will lend it to Dr. Smiley," exclaimed Harry.

"Thank you, my dear boy," answered Mrs. Armstrong, mastering the emotion with which she was evidently struggling. "Do not bring anything here, for I do not know how long I shall have a home."

This information surprised Harry very much, for, although he knew his mother was poor, he thought she was in comfortable circumstances.

"What do you mean, mother?" he asked.

"I would not make this avowal," she continued, "if it was not really necessary that you should know all. In order to pay for your board and education, I mortgaged my house, and have paid the interest on the loan out of my life annuity. Dr. Smiley agreed to take a lump sum for the five years, you were to be with him. I paid it and have lived as economically as possible."

Harry knew this to be a fact, for, contrary to his advice, his mother had recently given up her servant, doing her work herself, even to lighting the fires and cooking.

"You did this for me, and I didn't know it," he said, in a tone of self-reproach.

"If not for you, my son, for whom should I do it?"

"I have been taking spending money from you, as well?"

"Of course. I want you to keep pace with your companions, and could not bear to have you look mean; but, let me proceed. The man from whom I borrowed the money on mortgage of my house is Mr. Gripper, of this village."

"The lawyer?"

"The same. He has been here to-day to give me notice of foreclosure, unless the entire amount is paid within three days. House and furniture will all go."

She hid her face in her handkerchief to hide her fast-falling tears.

"What is the amount you paid Dr. Smiley for me?" inquired Harry.

"Two thousand dollars."

Harry groaned in agony of spirit, for this seemed an impossible sum for them to raise.

"When Mr. Gripper came to me, I asked him if he would lend me some money on my annuity, which, as you are doubtless aware, is three hundred dollars a year, and on which I have been enabled to live, by the exercise of strict frugality."

"What was his reply?"

"He informed me, with a coarse brutality which I did not expect from him, that Dr. Burns, my physician, had told him that I had heart disease, and might die at any moment, if unduly excited; therefore my life was anything but a first-class risk, and he would not lend me a hundred dollars on it."

"The brute!" exclaimed Harry indignantly.

"I asked him what made him press me when I had regularly paid him his six per cent. interest?" said Mrs. Armstrong.

"Wait a moment, mother," cried Harry.

He made a rapid arithmetical calculation which in its result shocked him very much.

His mother's income was only three hundred dollars; that was all she had to live upon. She had borrowed \$2,000 to pay for his education, at Dr. Smiley's, on which loan she paid six per cent. interest. That footed up to \$120. Now, subtract that sum from three hundred and how much had she left to live upon? Simply one hundred and eighty dollars a year!

She couldn't do it. It was impossible. It was not a dollar a day, nor anything near it.

There was a mystery, somewhere.

What a mother! What sacrifices she had made for her son, and how he ought to love her!

"Go on mother!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Gripper further informed me that, being himself pressed for money, he had sold his mortgage to a client, and that it was not he but the client who was pressing for the money."

"That is an excuse of Gripper," averred Harry.

"I think not; the man seemed to be really sorry for me, and I have heard from other sources that he is in difficulties."

Harry looked keenly at his mother, and catching his eye said: "Mother, tell me truly, how you have managed to live."

"For days I have eaten nothing but bread," she replied.

"And for me! I am the cause of it!" exclaimed Harry, wildly.

"Oh no! Please God I shall live to see you getting your own living, and you will return it, will you not, my dear?"

She stroked his fair curly hair, and smiled with all a mother's pride and love for her son.

"If your poor brother Sam knew how I was situated, he would surely help me," she continued; "but, as we have not heard from him for so long I fear he must be dead."

"If Sam hadn't light hair like me," exclaimed Harry, "I should say that a man I rowed against to-day was he, but this fellow had black hair and a long black beard. I never saw any one put a boat along as he did, except Sam, and you know what a terror he was."

"Yes, he was strong as a lion, and yet as tender-hearted as a girl," replied Mrs. Armstrong.

"By the way, mother," said Harry, "who is Gripper's client? I might go to him, and plead with him for time. If he has a heart he will not turn you out of your dear old home."

"It will kill me to leave it and go among strangers, as I shall be compelled to do; but, the name—he did not give it me. However, you can ask him yourself, for he will be here in a few minutes to know if I can do anything to avert the threatened calamity. If not, he will advertise the sale at once."

There was a ring at the bell at this juncture, which Harry answered, admitting Mr. Lawyer Gripper, whom he conducted into the parlor.

"Good evening, Master Harry!" he exclaimed. "This is a sad business—very sad indeed."

He took a seat and rubbed his hands together, as if he was washing them with invisible soap.

"Who is your hard-hearted client?" inquired Harry.

"A former friend of yours—quite an estimable young man; his family is very rich; he has the command of money."

"His name?"

"Mr. Simeon Adderly!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Harry Armstrong's feet he could not have been more surprised.

There was no hope now, for he saw that he was in the power of his enemy. Sim Adderly

was the snake in the grass who, for the sake of revenge, had done the cruel thing.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, "we are lost. Adderly was at Dr. Smiley's and I have quarreled with him."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Gripper, sanctimoniously, "my client, Mr. Adderly, may be of a forgiving spirit. If you have offended him, go to him and ask his forgiveness."

Harry fidgeted uneasily on his chair.

"I cannot humble myself to him," he said. "Because he, and not I, is in the wrong. If I'd done him any harm, it would be another thing."

"Do you really know this Mr. Adderly, Harry?" asked his mother.

"Very well indeed—too well."

"Perhaps Mr. Gripper's advice is worth taking. I do not want to control your actions; but—"

"Enough, mother!" interrupted Harry. "I would do anything in the world for you, and to save you, if possible, from this annoyance, I will go to Adderly now."

He rose and put on his hat, and, as he quitted his seat, so did Mr. Gripper.

"Pardon me," said he; "but, in the event of the young gentleman being unsuccessful, will it be convenient for me to take the inventory tomorrow morning? The goods must be catalogued for the printer."

"Use your pleasure, sir," replied Mrs. Armstrong, bowing her head submissively.

Harry wrung his mother's hand affectionately and gave Mr. Gripper a nod.

It went very much against his inclination and his pride to ask any favor from Adderly, but he felt that he ought to leave no stone unturned to save his mother, because there was no doubt that Adderly had heard of this mortgage from Mr. Gripper, and had bought it for the express purpose of injuring him.

He called at Adderly's house and was informed that he had not yet come home, and he turned his footsteps in the direction of the gymnasium, expecting to find him still there.

In the moment of triumph, he had raised the cup of delight to his lips, only to find it full of the bitterest gall and wormwood.

The gymnasium was full of young men, who were enjoying themselves hugely, some one having ordered two kegs of beer to celebrate the race.

"Say, boys!" exclaimed Charley Scofield, "Here's the Cap back again. I thought he wouldn't desert us."

"Hurrah for the Captain of the Club!" cried Round.

"I'll club you!" replied Harry, "if you aren't quiet. You've had too much beer, Punch."

"There's lots more where that came from!"

"Who set up the keg?"

"Hanged if I know!" answered Punch; "but I guess the keg's going to set me up."

"Adderly!" exclaimed Shillito, who had lately joined the crowd of boating men, "Adderly put up for the beer, which is more than the man who won the cup had the decency to do. Let's drink Adderly's health, fellows!"

It was clear that Adderly had a considerable following, for his health was drunk with up roarious applause.

"Speech! speech!" cried half a dozen voices.

Adderly jumped upon a table and, removing from his mouth the cigar he was smoking, bowed to the boys.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "I thank you for the honor you have done me. I'm afraid that you are shouting more for the beer than for me. It wasn't exactly my place to provide refreshments, as I got distanced in the race, but the winner has sneaked away, probably to avoid expense. Anyway, we can do without him, and when this keg's empty, I'll order in another, as nothing pleases me more than to see the boys enjoy themselves, and as long as I've got a dollar, I'll spend it with the gang."

This speech was received with a burst of applause that fairly made the rafters ring.

Adderly had made a hit, and several men, who had not liked him hitherto, were heard to remark:

"That he was not such a bad fellow, after all!"

Standing in the rear of the hall was Harry, who had not been noticed by Adderly, or it is doubtful if he would have made the allusion he did to him in his speech.

"Aren't you going to reply to that?" asked Tuffin, at his side.

"What can I say?" answered Harry. "I've no money to treat the boys with. If I had—"

"Hush up! Take this!" interrupted the trainer, handing him a ten-dollar bill.

"No, thank you!" replied Harry.

"You won't take it?"

"If I did, heaven only knows when I could pay it, and I have a holy horror of getting into any one's debt."

"Step up like a man, and do the proper thing."

"No, no," said Harry, whose breast was torn by conflicting emotions. "Tell Adderly I want to speak to him, right here, in this corner, on a matter of business."

Tuffin, the trainer, accepted the mission very unwillingly and presently returned with Adderly.

"Do you want to see me?" he asked, keeping nervously out of reach of Harry's arm, as if he feared he was going to wreak summary vengeance upon him.

"Yes, I sent for you."

"You needn't think you can make any disturbance here. I have friends, as you see."

"Don't be alarmed; I don't feel like fighting, I can assure you, but I may take advantage of this opportunity to say that you went out of your way to insult me, just now."

"Oh! about sneaking away?"

"My mother sent for me, and—"

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Adderly, "if you have come about that affair, I really cannot spare time to talk to you."

"But, Adderly—"

"Pardon me; I can only refer you to my lawyer, Mr. Gripper. You know where to find him."

"I have seen him already."

"Well, if you are prepared to pay the money, by all means do so."

"You know that is impossible," said Harry, "but, if you have the least spark of feeling in your heart, you will give us a little time to look around us."

"See Mr. Gripper, if you please."

"If I had the money I would pay it."

"Very good, sir!" exclaimed Adderly, with an insolence which was born of the power he knew he possessed, "the matter is entirely beyond my control. I bought the mortgage as an investment, and finding I was somewhat mistaken in my calculations I want to get rid of it. Excuse me if I go away; I want to talk to my friends."

"If you could only give us a week," pleaded Harry, thinking of his mother all the time.

He raised his hand as if to stop Adderly, who was moving away, and in so doing displayed the amethyst ring which Tessy had given him, and to gain which Adderly had done such an unworthy action.

"Give me that ring," he exclaimed, "and I will put off the sale for a fortnight."

A terrible struggle now took place in Harry's mind. If he gave up Tessy's ring to his hated rival, she would never forgive him, and perhaps the delay he would buy at such a price, would, after all, be of very little use to his poor mother.

"I cannot do that," he replied.

"You want to save your mother from trouble and you will not make that sacrifice!" sneered Adderly.

Hastily, Harry drew the ring from his finger, and handed it to his rival.

"Take it!" he said hoarsely; "no power on earth could have wrung it from me; but," he added to himself, "my mother comes before even my love."

With a proud feeling, Adderly put the amethyst ring on his finger and gazed affectionately at it.

"Gripper shall be instructed to postpone the sale," he said, "for a fortnight from to-day."

Then he turned calmly away, puffing at his cigar, and was quickly surrounded by several toadies, who respected money more than manhood.

Harry now saw that he did not meet Adderly as a school-mate, but as a man of the world, and he recognized the fact that in the contest in life, wealth will tell."

Quitting the gymnasium he returned to the house of his mother and informed her that he had gained a fortnight's time for her, in which, perhaps, she might be able to transfer the mortgage or get some relief, yet it was with a heavy heart that he returned to Doctor Smiley's.

For several days he tried to avoid Tessy, lest she should see that the ring was gone.

The discovery, however, was inevitable, and it was rather a relief to him than otherwise, when it came.

Tessy met him in the garden one morning after breakfast and said: "Where is your ring, Mr. Armstrong?"

She had never called him Mr. Armstrong before, and he knew that she was angry.

"I—I—" he stammered, "It is—"

Then he broke down.

"You need not tell me anything that is untrue, because that would be unworthy of you. I have been in Sweetwater to-day, and I have seen the ring on Mr. Adderly's finger. He was good enough to tell me that you gave it to him for a consideration. Is it true?"

"I did give it him for a consideration, but not of a money nature," replied Harry.

"That is quite sufficient," she exclaimed. "I now know how much you care for my presents. Henceforth we meet as strangers."

"For heaven's sake let me explain!"

She turned upon him passionately, almost furiously:

"Has not that odious man got my ring?" she cried.

"I admit it!"

"Can he not—does he not show it to every one, and say it was mine?"

"I hope not; that would be ungentlemanly and mean."

"But I have positive proof of it. You ought to have cut off your right hand before you gave that ring away."

"Hear me—"

"I will not!" she answered, catching up her skirts and striding away with the air of a duchess.

Harry was overwhelmed.

He was not allowed to offer any explanation and he was condemned unheard.

Sorrowful and sad at heart he went to bed, his recent pride at the victory on the Harlem being overshadowed by the double trouble that Adderly had brought upon him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEST OF LOVE AND PLUCK.

As Harry was too proud to seek a reconciliation with Tessy, after her harsh treatment of him, and as she studiously avoided him, the breach widened between them.

He went the next day to visit his mother, and together they called on all their friends to ask for assistance, but as is usual in such cases, they did not receive any.

Weary and dispirited, he was going home, when he saw a buggy, containing two men, going along at a high rate of speed.

The horse shied at some paper lying in the road, and the buggy was overturned, both men being thrown out.

This accident took place nearly opposite the gymnasium, and the trainer, who was standing at the door, hastened, at the same time as Harry, to render what assistance he could.

One of the men was only a little shaken, and he sprung to his feet at once.

"Why, Tuffun!" he exclaimed, "is it you?"

"Joe Corner, as I'm alive!" cried the trainer. "You and I, old sport, haven't met for two years."

"That's so! but, don't waste any time in chinning; let us see what's happened the 'Unknown'."

They approached the second man, who was groaning with pain and seemed much hurt.

With Harry's help, they carried him into the gymnasium and sent Queersticks for a doctor, who, on examination, pronounced the right leg broken above the knee.

Joe Corner uttered a smothered imprecation.

"Hang the luck!" he exclaimed; "that settles me. If I can put him to bed in your house, I'll tell you all about it."

The trainer made no opposition; the wounded man was put to bed and the doctor dressed his leg, after which, Tuffun and Joe Corner returned to the gymnasium, where, for want of something better to do, Harry was amusing himself by swinging on the trapeze.

They went into the private office together, and the trainer produced a bottle of brandy and a box of cigars.

"Help yourself and unburden your mind," he said.

Joe Corner was not slow to avail himself of this permission, and having quenched his thirst and lighted a cigar, he spoke:

"You know that I've been in the same business as you, all my life—fighting, running, rowing, sparring and training; but my luck's dead out with that accident."

"How's that?"

"Didn't you hear me call my friend, who is at your house, the 'Unknown'?"

"Why, you don't mean to say—"

"I do."

The two men looked solemnly at one another, and Joe Corner nodded his head in a sagacious manner.

"That's Jim the Flyer," continued Corner, after a pause, "and I regarded him as a perfect gold mine. I was just taking him for a drive in the country, before he started on his great feat."

"I saw that you had heavily backed an unknown man to walk against O'Meara, the champion."

"Of course you did; it's been in all the papers."

"And that's him?" Tuffun demanded.

"That's the Flyer!"

He produced a hand-bill, which he presented to the trainer, for his inspection. It was as follows:

"**GREAT FIVE HUNDRED MILE WALK, FOR \$1,000.**—Joe Corner's Unknown, on February 13th, will walk, at Gilmore's Garden, New York City, against O'Meara, the champion of the world, the distance to be completed within six days."

"You see it's this way," continued Joe Corner, "I've put up a forfeit of two hundred dollars which will be a dead loss if I don't produce my man. There is great interest already in the match and the gate money will be worth having, you can bet! I wasn't so sure that the Flyer could beat O'Meara, but I know he can stay and would walk all the time."

"Get some one else," suggested the trainer.

"I can't. There isn't a man I know who could walk five hundred miles in six days. It requires prodigious pluck and good training. In fact, I don't think O'Meara will make more than four hundred. If I could get any one who would keep on the track I wouldn't care, for I needn't tell an old stager like you that these matches are got up for the gate money."

"Of course we know that."

"Well, you see where my bad luck is now. My match is off. I lose my forfeit and the chances of what I could make."

Tuffun slapped his knee energetically.

"It don't matter who you produce as the Unknown?" he asked.

"Not at all."

"Any one will do as well as Jim the Flyer?"

"If he can walk or run, and stay."

"Then I know the man, and I'd put up my last dollar on him; ay, sell my coat, but I can't promise he'll walk for you," exclaimed Tuffun.

"Who is he?"

"That young fellow, who helped us in with the Flyer."

"What! that snip of a boy?" cried Joe Corner, his countenance falling again.

"It's evident you don't know him," replied Tuffun, the trainer. "That's Harry Armstrong, the Captain of the Club, and the Terror of the Harlem River—that's who he is!"

"Gentleman amateur?"

"Most decidedly!"

"Call him in and we'll talk to him. If he can get me out of this mess I'll give him anything in reason for his services and keep his name a secret," said Joe Corner.

"Mind you, he's a gentleman, every inch of him, and I can't promise any thing," replied Tuffun. "However I'd like to help an old friend out of a hole, and I'll do my best."

He went out into the gymnasium, where Harry was still swinging on the trapeze, and he could not help admiring the magnificent proportions of the young man, his splendidly developed muscle and his almost leonine strength.

"Cap?" he exclaimed, "can I have a word with you?"

"A dozen if you wish it," replied Harry, alighting cleverly at his feet.

"I've got something to say to you, Cap, and I don't want you to be offended, either."

"Go right straight ahead. Nothing an old friend like you can say will hurt me," answered Harry, with a good-natured smile.

He naturally thought that the coming communication would have something to do with his relations with Adderly.

"You saw that man fired out of the buggy."

"I did."

"Well, that was Jim the Flyer," continued Tuffun in a mysterious whisper.

"Indeed! I am as wise now as I was before."

"Never heard of Jim the Flyer?"

"Never."

"You don't read your *Clipper* as you ought, Cap. He's a long-distance walkist, and 'way ahead at that; but, what I want to say is this: Joe Corner, the trainer, who is in my private room now, had backed Jim as an unknown, to walk or run against O'Meara, the champion, for six days, at Gilmore's, and you can see that this accident has knocked his calculations all out of time."

"Certainly; that is evident on the face of it," replied Harry.

"What he wants is a substitute, or he'll have to pay forfeit; and it is not easy to find a 'stayer' at a day's notice."

"I should think not; but, in what way does this concern me, or how can I help your friend?"

"Easy enough, if you'll only do it."

"Really I'm at a loss to understand you," said Harry, with an air of perplexity.

Tuffun lowered his voice to a mysterious whisper again:

"*Do it yourself!*" he said.

"*What!* *I!*" cried Harry.

He was completely taken aback at this proposition, because the undertaking was one of such magnitude.

"*You're in good training.*"

"Never was in a better condition in my life."

"Come and see Joe Corner; settle it between you," exclaimed Tuffun, taking him by the arm and leading him to the private office.

"*But—*"

"Don't say another word to me," interrupted the trainer; "I've given him your record, and he's known me too long to doubt my word or my judgment. Cap, you're a wonder, and the only trouble with you is, you don't know it."

Harry suffered himself to be conducted to the private office.

"Joe," he said, "this is Mr. Armstrong, the Captain of the Club."

"*What club?*"

"*Mar'ronecks.*"

"Glad to see you, sir!" exclaimed Joe. "I suppose Tuff. has told you all about the hole I'm in, owing to that breakdown?"

"*He has.*"

"Are you willin' to be billed for the 'Unknown,' and do the thing right up to the handle for me?"

"Allow me to ask a few questions," said Harry.

"With the greatest of pleasure."

"In the first place, when does this race take place?"

"Next Monday morning at one o'clock."

"What will you give me if I accept?"

"My terms are these," replied Joe Corner: "If you last out the whole six days, without weakening or leaving the track, except for such sleep or food as I think you require, I will give you \$1,000. If you beat the champion's time, you shall have \$2,000."

Harry paced up and down the narrow office.

The offer was very tempting; it was worth accepting, because the match would conclude a few days before the sale of his mother's house and furniture, and if he could, by his pluck and endurance, beat O'Meara, he would be in a position to bid for the property even if Adderly was mean enough to foreclose in the meantime and force a sale.

By the gift of the ring he had extracted a promise from him that he would not sell for a fortnight and he did not think that Adderly would break his word, so solemnly given and purchased at such a price.

His resolution was soon taken.

He determined to ask for a week's leave from Doctor Smiley and to tell his mother that he was going to visit some distant relations from whom he expected to receive help.

"Mr. Corner," he exclaimed, "I accept your offer."

"*It's a go?*"

"*It is.*"

"Shake hands on it! Mind, I take you on Tuffun's recommendation, and I never knew him wrong yet."

"As far as strength and will can go, you may rely on me," replied Harry.

"*That settles it.*"

The bargain was made and some further conversation completed the preliminaries; after which Harry returned to the doctor's house.

He did not tell any one what he was going to do, for, young as he was, he knew the value of secrecy in important undertakings.

That day was Friday, and the time for the start rapidly approached. He obtained the leave he wanted and satisfied his mother's scruples, arranging to start on his imaginary journey on Sunday afternoon.

At breakfast, on Sunday morning, Fitzhugh was reading the paper and he exclaimed, "By Jove!"

"What is it you find interesting enough to force that heathenish exclamation from you?" inquired Miss Smiley.

"Going to be a great—aw—walking match at Gilmore's."

"*Indeed!*"

"An unknown man is to walk against the aw—champion."

"We must go and see that. Will you take me, Mr. Fitzhugh?" asked Tessy.

"Aw—delighted, I'm sure, Miss Smiley!" he replied.

Tessy cast a glance at Harry, but he did not dare to meet her eye.

In the afternoon he went to Sweetwater, where Tuffin had a wagon ready to drive him up to town, and at dusk, he arrived at the garden, where he was received with open arms by Joe Corner.

By the time appointed for the race to begin there was quite a sprinkling of spectators, and the members of the press, who in vain tried to interview the 'Unknown,' who remained unknown as far as they were concerned.

The history of the match is the history of all such matches, and would not be interesting in its minute details.

Suffice it to say that, at the end of the first twenty-four hours, Harry led the champion by eight miles!

His endurance was wonderful, but it will seem less remarkable if we remember the cause in which he was working.

Success meant, ease and comfort for his mother—that ease and comfort which she had so generously sacrificed to provide an education for her son.

Joe Corner was charmed and declared that his 'unknown' was a prodigy.

Speculation was rife as to who the new man was, and the secret was kept for the first two days; after which several people from Sweetwater came up and recognized him.

Then the excitement redoubled, and the Garden was crowded, for it was known that a young gentleman amateur was trying to beat the time of the champion of the United States.

Among the spectators were Miss Smiley and Fitzhugh, but Harry did not stop to speak to them.

A constant visitor at the Garden was Captain Far-West, who gave Joe Corner several valuable hints for nourishing his man and took the greatest interest in the match.

On the fourth day, Harry was greatly fatigued, but he had gradually increased his lead to thirty-seven miles.

Every one said he must break down. They were mistaken, however, for he had a constitution of iron and a will that nothing could subdue.

"I'll walk," he said to Joe Corner, "till I break my heart, as poor Renforth did, in the four-oar."

All the efforts of O'Meara to run or walk down the Captain of the Club were fruitless.

On the fifth day, O'Meara had a severe blister on his left foot, which made him limp painfully, so that his time was slower.

This was a godsend to Harry, who was nearly worn out; nothing but sheer pluck, nerve, and the memory of his mother's difficulties, keeping him on the track.

On Saturday night, at twelve o'clock, the match closed, and Harry Armstrong was declared the winner!

He had made four hundred and twenty miles to the champion's four hundred and thirteen, winning the match by seven miles, which was a great achievement!

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHERIFF'S SALE.

Of course the champion's friends said that if it had not been for the blister on the foot, he could not have been beaten; but ever since the world began the defeated have always had some excuse ready to their hand.

The receipts at the door had been amply sufficient to satisfy the promoters of the match, and Joe Corner gladly gave Harry the \$2,000 he had promised him.

Harry was the lion of the hour. The papers had got hold of his name and every one was talking about the Captain of the Club.

As Corner gave him the money he said "Don't let any one know that I paid you."

"Why not?" asked Harry.

"It may do you harm. You see, if you walk for pay, you become a professional, and it will disqualify you as an amateur."

"I see," replied Harry; "thank you for the hint. There is no reason why anything should be said about it; though, of course, if the question was put to me point-blank, I couldn't tell a falsehood."

"Well, me and Tuff won't let on," said Joe. "Thank you for me. I'm your friend for life, young man, and you can bet your bottom dollar I shall not lose sight of you."

Harry hurried to a hotel, where Tuffin attended to him and saw that he had a good sleep and did not eat too much when he woke up.

He slept with only a slight intermission for

forty-eight hours; and when he woke up he eat heartily and did not seem any the worse for his long tramp.

"What day is it?" he asked of a waiter who answered his ring.

"Tuesday, sir," was the reply.

Harry turned pale, for this day was the limit of Adderly's indulgence.

"Bring my bill," he exclaimed. "I must go at once."

"All's paid, sir."

"By whom?"

"Mr. Corner, sir; he's been here this morning and there's nothing to pay."

Harry hastened out of the house; and, hiring the first hack he saw, ordered the driver to go to Sweetwater at his best pace.

It was twelve o'clock when he drove to his mother's house.

He was surprised to see the red flag of the auctioneer hanging to the railings of the garden.

Getting out of the hack, he walked into the house, where a crowd of people were assembled in the parlor, handling the ornaments, laughing, smoking and talking.

A neighbor recognized him.

"What does this mean?" he gasped.

"I'm sorry for you," replied the neighbor. "Your mother takes it very well, though."

"Where is she?"

"At our house. My wife has taken her in." The conversation was interrupted by the voice of the auctioneer, who rapped with his gavel.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, "the property will be put up first in one lot, and the furniture sold afterward according to catalogue. Are you ready, gentlemen? What shall we say for this substantially built frame house?"

"Fifteen hundred," said a buyer in the crowd.

"Thank you. Fifteen hundred is bid. Any advance on fifteen hundred? This is a foreclosure sale, gentlemen, and we must cover the amount of the mortgage, which is two thousand. Seventeen. Eighteen—"

"Two thousand!" cried Harry, in a voice which trembled with emotion.

This was a large bid, as the furniture was included in the amount named in the mortgage deed, and that was supposed to be able to fetch at least two hundred.

There was a pause.

Every one looked at Harry, and a murmur of applause arose.

"Two thousand is bid. Any advance on that sum?" said the auctioneer. "Really, gentlemen, this elegant freehold is going for a song. It is the greatest bargain I ever heard of—upon my honor it is—dirt cheap at that price."

No one bid.

"I'd like to have the place," said one buyer. "But I'm not going to bid against the boy and his mother's son, too."

"Two thousand dollars," cried the auctioneer.

"Going at—"

"Two thousand five hundred," exclaimed a voice.

Harry looked round with despair in his heart.

He saw that the new bidder was Mr. Rasper, and by his side stood Sim Adderly, who had no doubt inspired the bid.

"Five hundred—five—five—who says six?" continued the auctioneer, in his monotonous voice. "Give you my word, gentlemen, this is the greatest sacrifice I ever witnessed. Who bids higher?"

"One hundred," said another voice.

Again Harry turned his gaze upon the crowd and was astonished to find that the new bidder was Captain Far-West, who complacently stroked his long black beard.

"Two thousand six hundred. Go it again. Don't be faint-hearted. It is an investment that will amply repay the outlay," exclaimed the auctioneer.

Harry sunk into a chair.

It was in vain now to hope that he could save the old home, and all his exertions had been in vain.

Adderly had foreclosed in his absence, and forced matters to a conclusion, though he had waited, according to promise, for two weeks, before he sold.

"Seven," cried Adderly.

"Eight," said Captain Far-West.

Mr. Gripper whispered to his client: "Don't bid any more. They are running it up against you, and you'll be out of pocket now if it is knocked down to you. What do you care, so long as the old woman and the boy don't get it."

"That's so," replied Adderly, in the same low tone.

"Eight—eight—eight," cried the auctioneer. "Going for two thousand eight hundred. Going. Gone."

Captain Far-West walked up to the auctioneer's table and took out a wallet well filled with bills.

"The house is mine," he said. "Have the conveyance made out to me at once, and name your price for the furniture. I'll buy the whole thing, right out, lock, stock and barrel."

A price was agreed upon after some altercation and dickering, and Captain Far-West paid the money.

"Now then, get out of here," he cried; "out you go, you vultures. This is my house and I'll have none of you in it. Begone, I say."

The crowd quickly vacated the premises.

Only Harry lingered, for he wanted to speak to the stranger who was now the owner of his old home.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "But there are a few things here that my mother would like to buy from you, if you will be good enough to allow her that privilege."

"What are they?" asked Captain Far-West, in a gruff voice.

"Only trifles. There's my father's portrait over the mantelpiece and—"

"Hold on! where is your mother?"

"At a neighbor's, next door," answered Harry.

"Take me to her, and I dare say we can come to terms. I'm not a hard man."

"That I am sure you are not."

Harry conducted him to the neighbor's house, with his head in a whirl. He had been fearfully disappointed, and he felt ill and sick at heart.

Mrs. Armstrong was weeping in a chair, but she brightened up when she saw her son.

"Why, Harry, you naughty boy," she exclaimed, "you said you were going to Boston, and they told me you have been distinguishing yourself in another great race."

"Yes, mother."

"Who is this gentleman, Harry?" she continued, looking at the captain.

"He is the owner of our house, mother."

"Oh! indeed; perhaps he has come for the keys. I have them in my pocket. It was very negligent of me not to give them to the auctioneer, but really he must excuse me. I have had a great deal of trouble lately, and my poor head is not so clear as it ought to be."

She fumbled in her pocket and produced the keys which she held out to him.

Suddenly Captain Far-West tore off what proved to be a black wig, and threw on the floor his bushy beard and side-whiskers, which were only false.

A fair-haired, smiling face was revealed; a couple of arms were thrown round the old lady's neck; and a cheery voice exclaimed, "What! mother, don't you know me? have you so soon forgotten Sam?"

"My son! my son! Thank the Lord! thank the Lord! bless his name!" murmured Mrs. Armstrong.

As for Harry, he danced and capered around the room like a mad thing.

"It is Sam," he said. "It's Sam, come back to us after all. I thought it was him, for I knew there was no fellow who could beat me on the Harlem except Sam. Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Disengaging himself from his mother's embrace, Sam Armstrong shook his brother heartily by the hand.

"God bless you, Harry," he said. "I'm proud of you, my boy, and you deserve it; but as for that fellow Adderly—well, I haven't done with him yet. That's all."

"Nor I," replied Harry.

"My dear boys," said Mrs. Armstrong, "let that mean man alone. Talk to me; let me realize all this new-born happiness. Tell me all about yourself, Sam."

"So I will, mother; but first let us go into our own house."

Mrs. Armstrong rose; and after thanking the neighbors for their kindness, walked, leaning on her two sons' arms, into that old house, which an hour before she thought she had quitted forever.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRAMP AND THE RING.

As may readily be imagined, Mrs. Armstrong was delighted beyond measure at seeing her son once more, and overwhelmed him with caresses.

His presence was doubly welcome, because he came at such an opportune moment, and baffled the villain Adderly at the precise time, when he thought his spite against Harry would be gratified.

Sam Armstrong explained why he had re-

sorted to a disguise when he arrived at the village.

He had wished to see what was going on, without being recognized; it was a whim of his, and he hoped his mother would pardon it.

How could she blame him, at such an instant, when her maternal instincts were so profoundly stirred?

When the happy mother and her two sons had enjoyed a confidential talk, Sam Armstrong said:

"Mother, I'm going to set up in business in this city, for I have made some money, West, and I mean to live with you, if you'll have me."

"If," repeated Mrs. Armstrong, reproachfully. "Now, Sam, you are joking. Don't you know that it is my pride and delight to have my boys with me?"

"I'll see, please God, that you never are worried again, as long as I have a dollar, or heaven gives me strength enough to earn one."

Mrs. Armstrong's eyes filled with tears, which she could not suppress.

"And now, mother," exclaimed Harry, "I think it is my turn. The money I won at the walking-match is yours, and when I am old enough to work, I will do as much for you as Sam."

The old lady, whose eyes were dimmed by her fast-falling tears, extended a hand to each of them.

Very pretty indeed was the scene which followed; for both boys raised each a hand to their lips, and reverently kissed it.

"Now, mother," said Harry, "I've got to go back to Mr. Smiley's, and I'll leave you with Sam, knowing that you could not be in better hands. On Sunday, I'll come over and eat dinner with you."

"If you don't," replied Sam, "I'll come and fetch you, sir."

"Come early, my dear boy," said Mrs. Armstrong, "and we will go to church. It is only fitting that we should return thanks for the great goodness we have benefited by."

Harry gladly promised compliance with this request.

"If you meet that mean, contemptible crawler named Adderly," remarked Sam, "just oblige me by kicking him—will you?"

"He'd have me arrested," answered Harry.

"No matter. I'll pay the fine."

"All right. In that case, consider him as good as kicked," said Harry, laughing.

Mrs. Armstrong was alarmed.

"Oh! Harry!" she exclaimed, "you would not do such a thing. We are taught to forgive our enemies and love those that despitefully use us."

"I'm afraid I'm not quite good enough for that, mother."

"Nor I," observed Sam. "I've a good deal of the old Adam in me."

"For shame, Sam!"

"Don't take on, mother," Sam Armstrong replied. "I was only in fun when I spoke to Harry. He won't hurt Adderly, because he's too dirty for a gentleman and a Christian to handle."

"I wouldn't touch him with a forty-foot pole; so you need not fear for me, mother," Harry said, cheerily. "No danger of my being arrested. Good-by all."

He kissed his mother. Shook hands cordially with his brother Sam, and started for home.

He had not gone far up the road, before he encountered Miss Smiley, walking with Fitzhugh.

Harry had remarked that, since the affair of the ring, Tessy had been a great deal with the Englishman.

Had she been so deeply offended that she had transferred her affections from him to Albert?

A momentary pang of jealousy shot through his heart.

This was dispelled, however, when Tessy, for the first time since their misunderstanding, held out her hand and said, frankly:

"We heard you were in some trouble, Harry; and Mr. Fitzhugh was kind enough to say that he would accompany me to your house and see if he could not help you out."

"Thank you very much," replied Harry. "I am extremely obliged to Fitzhugh, but things are all right now."

"Aw! delighted to hear it," said the Englishman. "I've got a small balance at my banker's, you know, and if a thousand would be of any use, it is—aw—entirely—aw—I may say, my dear fellow, altogether at your service—aw."

"You have heard, then—"

"Why, yes, you know, in—aw—country places, news travels like the—aw—deuce, you know. Excuse the—aw—remark, Miss Smiley."

"I will, this time," replied Tessy, "though I must confess I object to language which is more forcible than elegant."

"Quite right, too, by Jove—aw. I don't like these girls who—aw—are so awfully loud, you know."

"What did you hear?" inquired Harry.

"Oh! nothing much, dear boy—don't—aw—want to hurt your feelings by a repetition of it."

"Don't think of that. I should like to hear what the report shaped itself into. Rumor has a hundred tongues, they say, and you may as well have the story right."

"Well, since you press it, you know, I'll tell you. It was—aw—reported," said Fitzhugh, "that—aw—that infernal cad, Adderly, had tried to sell you up—put the—aw—sheriff in possession, and all that sort of thing, you know—sale by auction—foreclosure of some confounded mortgage or something—so Miss Smiley and I started down to the village to offer our services—and there it is, you know."

"It was very, very kind of you," answered Harry. "But thank goodness, we are not constrained to ask any one for help."

"Oh! well, don't—aw—be offended. We meant well, you know—friends of yours and—aw—all that sort of thing, dear boy."

"I understand."

"May I inquire what good angel came to your rescue?" asked Tessy.

"My brother, Sam."

"Indeed! The one who went to California?"

"The same."

"I remember him well, and am charmed to know that he has made money out there."

"Well," exclaimed Fitzhugh, "we may as well retrace our—aw—steps, Miss Smiley."

"Certainly," she answered. "Are you going home, Harry?"

"Home!" he repeated vaguely.

"I mean to our house. Papa expects you; but of course you wish to stay with your 'long-lost brother,' as they say in the play. I will make your excuses."

"Oh! yes—I shall be home almost as soon as you are," replied Harry. "But I just want to look in at the gymnasium for half an hour."

Tessy looked as if she were disappointed.

"I was in hopes that you would come back with us. You are the hero of the hour, since you won the walking-match; and we want to hear all about it from your own lips."

"I'll tell you, this evening."

"Very well; but let me advise you to have nothing to say to Adderly."

"Why?"

"Because we have heard that he has threatened to have you arrested, if you even use language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace."

Harry laughed scornfully.

"The mean hound!" he said. "I shall utterly ignore him in future, if he will only let me alone."

"Perhaps he will try to irritate you."

"Then I will not answer for the consequences. My temper is a little hot, Miss Smiley."

"The fellow is—aw—most objectionable to me," observed Fitzhugh; "repulsive to the last degree, you know. I pity him, if he—aw—says much to me. I'm—aw—hard hitter. Rather pride myself on my muscle, you know, and—aw—always hit straight from the au—hip, my boy."

"So do I?" answered Harry, smiling.

"I am sorry you cannot walk back with us," continued Tessy; "but we will not make ourselves uneasy about you."

Fitzhugh had walked on a few paces; and, emboldened by Tessy's good nature, Harry took advantage of the opportunity to say: "Have you quite forgiven me, Miss Smiley?"

"Not quite," she replied.

"What can I do to regain your favor?"

"Bring me the ring."

With these words, she looked significantly at him and walked after Fitzhugh.

Harry heaved a deep sigh, and pursued his way to the gymnasium.

"Bring me the ring!"

How could he do it, when it was in the possession of Adderly? Very gladly would he have complied with her request, had it been in his power to do so; for he was just as anxious to get the ring again, as she was; and he knew full well that she would give it to him, if she had it.

He was pleased to find that she was not so angry with him as she had been, for the coldness of her manner had been a source of great annoyance to him. In fact, until they quarreled he had not really known how much he cared for her.

He was walking along the pleasant country

road, indulging all sorts of agreeable thoughts, though a little perplexed about the ring, when he was approached by a wretched-looking specimen of humanity.

This fellow was a young man about twenty-five years of age, though the lines in his face made him look older.

His clothes were all tattered and torn; his shoes might have been worn before and since the deluge; his hat would have graced a scarecrow, and the dirt on his hands and face showed that he had long been a stranger to soap and water.

Involuntarily, Harry put his hand into his pocket and produced a quarter.

While he himself was well fed, he'd good clothes on his back and enjoyed a comfortable bed to sleep in, he could not bear to see a fellow-creature, who from his wretched appearance seemed to command none of these blessings.

"Hard up?" he queried.

"Broke the worst way, boss," replied the man.

"Take this," continued Harry, handing him the quarter. "I guess you'll spend it in rum; but no matter."

The man clutched the money eagerly.

"No I won't, neither," he exclaimed, raising his voice as he uttered the emphatic negative. "Not much I won't. If you was as hungry as I am, you wouldn't want no rum."

"What are you by trade?" inquired Harry.

"Nothing."

"Never been brought up to anything?"

The man smiled faintly, making his wrinkled, cadaverous face look still more painfully hollow.

"That's the worst of it," he answered. "If I'd had a trade I might have made a living, but I was brought up to do nothing and live on my mother. When she died I spent what little she left, and now I am what you see me—a tramp."

"Well, good-by, I wish you luck, and hope you will have a chance to learn a trade," said Harry kindly.

"Too late," replied the tramp, sadly.

Harry's good nature was again aroused, and he drew out some more money.

He was imprudent enough to disclose a large number of bills, at which the tramp's eyes glistened.

"Here's another quarter for you," exclaimed Harry.

The tramp immediately assumed a sullen air.

"You're well fixed," he remarked insolently.

"Yes," replied Harry, calmly, "I have plenty of money, but I worked hard for it, and have uses for it."

"Mean to spend it—hey?"

"No, I do not. It will go to my mother who needs it, and has every right to it. Take your quarter."

The tramp drew himself up.

"I'll have all or none," he said.

At this Harry Armstrong fired up, and his face flushed with indignation.

He was in splendid condition, in the height of training, in fact, and he felt at that moment as if he was fit to fight for a man's life.

His fists clenched together, and the muscles of his mouth were drawn tightly down, while his eyes flashed angrily.

"What did you say?" he demanded.

"All or none," replied the tramp.

"My answer is ready: you will have none."

"Look at here," said the tramp, "I'm older than you, and can lick you easy."

"I don't think so."

"Well, I'll soon show you."

"Want to try?"

"That's my game," answered the tramp.

"You think you have a boy to deal with," retorted Harry, without exhibiting any excitement, though he felt his heart beat quicker and his pulse jump a little; "and you imagine you can lick and rob me."

"Well, I should smile if I couldn't."

"All right, my fine fellow, sail in. I warn you, though, that I belong to an athletic club, and that the Mamaronecks are not to be laughed at."

The tramp wasted no more words, but at once attacked Harry, who countered his blow, and struck him heavily on the jaw, sending him to grass.

This was round the first; and time was soon called, as the tramp got up quickly and forced the fighting.

Harry was struck on the temple, narrowly escaping a blow behind the ear, by dodging his head, and he retaliated by hitting his antagonist

on the nose, with such force that he caused the blood to spurt in all directions.

"First blood for the boy!" he exclaimed. "Do you want any more?"

The tramp wiped away the fast flowing blood with the back of his hand, and gazed curiously at Harry.

"Thunder!" he cried; "you've got a fist as hard as iron. I thought I should get away with you easily."

"And you found you were mistaken."

"I'll own up."

"Do you want any more punishment?" asked Harry.

"I'm not running," replied the tramp, "I'm standing right here."

Harry immediately attacked him, and in two minutes that unfortunate tramp was the most badly demoralized mortal within ten miles of Sweetwater.

"I give up, squire," he said, as he sat in the middle of the road, rubbing his ear. "Don't kick a man when he's down."

"That is not my way of doing business," replied Harry. "I had no wish to hurt you. It was not I who provoked the row."

"No, sir."

"You brought it all on yourself."

"I did, sir," replied the tramp, with increasing civility.

"Let this be a lesson to you. I might have you locked up on a charge of highway robbery."

"Don't do it—I've been in jail once," said the tramp, in a piteous tone.

"You have?"

"Yes, sir; I haven't long come off the island. I've no friends, and I'm driven to get a living somehow. Times are hard—they are indeed."

"What's your name?"

"Gideon Radley, sir."

"Well, Gideon," exclaimed the Captain of the Club, kindly, "promise me you will try and work at something, if it's ever so humble, and I'll abandon my intention of dragging you into the village and handing you over to the police."

The tramp, badly knocked about as he was got up and extended his hand.

"Put it there, sir," he said.

"You mean to say, you promise?"

"I will try—but it's different between you and me. Life is all rosy for you; as for me—what am I?"

Harry declined to answer.

"Won't you shake?" asked the tramp.

"My good fellow," replied Harry, "I only shake hands with an honest man; not with a—excuse me, if I hurt your feelings—a self-confessed thief."

"And you call yourself a Christian?"

"I hope I am, and not a bad one at that."

"All I can say is, that I read the Bible and went to Sunday school, when I was young; but our Master did not teach that kind of doctrine."

"I'd do anything I could for you," answered Harry, taken aback. "Only I'm not a Socialist, and can't help believing that one man is better than another, so long as he proves himself so."

"You want to help me?" exclaimed the tramp, eagerly.

"I do."

"Will you buy something from me?"

"What is it?"

"A ring."

The man fumbled in a pocket in one of his ragged garments, and produced a ring.

No sooner did Harry's eyes light upon it than he recognized the very identical ring that Adderly had won at the paper chase.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, much agitated.

"I found it."

"Where?"

"In the road, a few yards from where we are standing," replied Gideon Radley.

"Is this true?"

"Honest Injin, squire. I wouldn't tell you a lie. I'll admit I'm bad. I'm a convicted thief and all that such a name implies. I'm a tramp, and never know, from one day to the other, where I am going to get something to eat or find a bed."

Harry reflected a moment.

"What will you take for it?" he asked.

"Twenty dollars."

Counting out the money, and giving it to the man, he said:

"The ring is mine."

He slipped it on his finger; and, with a few more words of advice to the tramp, bid him good-day and hastened toward the village.

He guessed that Adderly must have dropped the ring in the road, and that the accident enabled Gideon Radley to pick it up.

A walk of about half a mile brought him to the gymnasium, and although he was anxious to get home, he could not resist the temptation of dropping in at his favorite place of amusement.

CHAPTER IX.

A SERIOUS AFFAIR.

He found several young men there, as usual; but, with the exception of Charley Scofield, they were all members of the Quinsagamond Athletic Club.

Adderly was the center of an interested group; and it may be mentioned here, that he had sent in his resignation to the Captain of the Mamaroneck Club a few days after he had found it convenient to leave Dr. Smiley's establishment.

Shillito was standing by Adderly's side, and appeared to have attached himself very closely to that young gentleman; Scofield was performing some prodigious feats with Indian clubs, swinging them about in all directions and with considerable dexterity.

On the black-board was a notice to this effect:

"GRAND ASSAULT OF ARMS,

"MONDAY EVENING, THE 25TH MARCH,

"At the Gymnasium, Sweetwater.

"Open to duly qualified members of any recognized club. Full particulars will shortly be published. Intending competitors may enter at once. Fee, one dollar.

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS IN PRIZES."

A paper, with pens and ink, lay on a table near the board; and it had already secured a score of signatures.

"I must go in for that; it would not be complete without me," remarked Harry, as he took up the pen and wrote his autograph.

At this moment, one of the clubs Scofield had been so deftly handling slipped from his hand and whizzed past the captain's head.

"Hello, Charley," he cried, "what are you trying to do?"

"Is that you, Cap?" replied Charley Scofield. "I beg you a thousand pardons; didn't see you, and the confounded old club slipped. No bones broken, eh?"

"Oh! no. It didn't hit me."

"Have you been signing the Declaration of Independence?"

"Something like it. What's this assault of arms going to be?" inquired Harry.

"Splendid. It's Tuffin's idea. There will be prizes for all sorts of difficult things."

"Such as—?" asked Harry.

"Well, such as cutting a dead sheep in half with a sword at one blow; jumping, running, fencing, single-stick, boxing, wrestling, and a good old-fashioned tug of war, to wind up with."

"That will be rare fun," said Harry. "I suppose Tuffin relies on the gate-money for the prizes?"

"Exactly. He has sold over a hundred already."

At this juncture Goring, the Captain of the "Necks," entered the place, smoking a cigarette; which, being contrary to all the received rules of training, excited the indignation of his followers.

"Oh!" cried Shillito. "This won't do. If any of us fellows had infringed the regulations in this way, we should have been down for a fine, as we are in training for that race with the Atlantans."

Goring threw the obnoxious weed away.

"I plead guilty," he exclaimed; "and throw myself upon the mercy of the court."

"Your plea is accepted," replied Meriton.

"Yes," said Adderly, "and the sentence of the court is that you promptly send for a certain quantity, known as a gallon, of a popular beverage, commonly called lager."

"Against the rules," exclaimed Goring; "you won't let me smoke and I cannot countenance beer-drinking."

Groans, loud and deep, arose at the expression of this Draconian law.

"What were you men all talking so earnestly about as I came up?" asked Goring.

"Adderly's been robbed," said Shillito.

"Indeed, how did that happen?"

"Let me tell my own story," replied Adderly.

"Certainly."

"I was walking along the Fordham road, when a fellow darted out from behind a tree, garroted me, stole my ring and some money I had about me, and then bolted."

"Did you see his face?"

"I did not, so that it would be impossible for me to identify the thief. In fact, it was all done in the twinkling of an eye," replied Adderly.

"Do you suspect any one?" asked Goring.

"It wouldn't do to say so, if I did," said Adderly with a vicious side glance at Harry Armstrong. "But, all I know is, simply this: there is only one person I am acquainted with, who has a direct interest in possessing that particular ring."

"For shame!" exclaimed Goring. "I know who you mean and you shouldn't say it."

"Whom do I mean?"

"Why, who else, but Armstrong?"

"Then you have heard the story of the ring?"

"Of course I have."

Hearing his name mentioned, Harry looked up and walked over to Goring, extending his hand, upon which glistened the identical ring in question.

"How are you, Goring?" he said, "who was talking about me?"

"It was nothing of any consequence," replied the Captain of the Necks.

By this time Adderly had seen the ring, and his sinister eyes twinkled maliciously.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "I think it is of some consequence. Will you kindly inform me, Armstrong, how my ring came into your possession."

Harry turned pale.

This was a contingency, that in his eagerness to possess the ring, he had entirely overlooked.

"With pleasure," he replied. "I met a poor broken down tramp, on the road, just now; and he offered the ring for sale, saying he had found it. I gave him twenty dollars for it."

Adderly smiled incredulously.

"Perhaps," he exclaimed, "you will be surprised to hear that I was garroted and robbed a couple of hours ago."

"Is that so?"

"I demand the ring," said Adderly.

"And I refuse to give it you," replied Harry firmly.

"In that case, it will be my painful duty to have you arrested on a criminal charge."

"Arrest me!" cried Harry indignantly.

"Why not? I accuse you of robbing me."

At this bold declaration, there was a dead silence.

Harry clinched his fists and looked as if he would like to tear his accuser in pieces. Indeed he took one step forward; but Goring interposed.

"We must not have any fighting here," he said. "This affair is very sad, and no one can regret it more than I do. It can only be settled in a court of law."

"But surely," replied Harry, "you do not accuse me of stealing Adderly's ring?"

"I am not your accuser."

"Do you believe me guilty?"

"Frankly I do not; but for your own sake, the matter must be fully investigated."

"Let him produce the tramp, who, he says, sold him the ring, and I shall be satisfied," observed Adderly.

"How can I?" answered Harry. "There are a thousand of tramps in the country, and this one may be miles off by this time."

"I shall get a warrant for your arrest," said Adderly.

"Don't be hasty," exclaimed Goring.

"Oh! my mind is made up," replied Adderly, who with a quick step, quitted the gymnasium.

Completely overwhelmed, Harry sat down, and the young men split up into groups to discuss the matter; the general opinion being that it looked bad for the Captain of the Club.

Adderly was greatly excited over what had happened, and seemed to take as much interest in the honor of Harry, as he would in his own.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"Really, I scarcely know. It is a most embarrassing position to be placed in," answered Harry.

"Even if the man did find the ring," said Scofield, "you can lay no claim to it legally."

"But I bought it and paid for it."

"No matter. If the tramp stole it, you must give it up. If he found it, he could give you no title in it."

"Is that good law?"

"You can rely upon it."

"Very well. I have acted foolishly throughout, and I will give it up. That, I suppose, will satisfy Adderly," said Harry, brightening, as he thought he saw a way out of the difficulty.

In a few minutes Adderly returned with a constable, whose name was Sherman.

The latter walked up to Harry, and showing a

warrant issued by a justice of the peace, said: "Very sorry, Mr. Armstrong; but I have to arrest you."

"Oh, I think you will be saved the trouble," replied Harry. "Here is the article of jewelry in dispute. I have decided to give it up to Mr. Adderly, rather than have any bother about it."

As he spoke, he drew it off his finger and handed it to Adderly, who, however, made no effort to take it.

"Too late," he ejaculated.

"What?"

"The law must take its course," said Adderly.

"You refuse to accept it?" cried Harry.

"I do. In the solitude of a prison, you will probably be able to invent some more plausible story, than the one you have told me, and you will find that you cannot half choke and rob people with impunity."

To this speech Harry made no answer, but contented himself with saying: "I am ready to go with you, Sherman."

He quitted the hall, and was conducted to the justice who had issued the warrant, and who committed him, in five thousand dollars bail, to the county jail.

Transportation was provided, and Harry was driven off, deeply humiliated, and vexed beyond measure.

It was one more victory that Adderly had scored against him, and fully compensated his enemy for the disappointment he had experienced in the result of the sale.

Harry did not attempt to obtain bail, nor did he send word of what had happened, either to his mother and brother or Doctor Smiley, knowing that the news would travel quickly enough, and that he would have plenty of visitors in the morning.

Conscious as he was of his own innocence of the odious charge to which the enmity of Adderly had subjected him, he felt that he had acted wrongly in not at once giving up the ring to the man whose property it really was.

The wisest of us sometimes commit blunders, and he was no exception to the rule.

The drive to the jail occupied some little time. Sherman, the officer, was not very talkative, and the journey was made in silence.

Harry's name was taken by the sheriff, and he was placed in a cell, like any other prisoner, and left to his own thoughts, which were not of the most agreeable nature.

The more he thought over his position, the graver it appeared to him to be.

Only one way of proving his innocence occurred to him, and that was to find the tramp, who had got him into all the trouble.

But where and how could he find him; and if he did, by what means could he induce him to incriminate himself?

Pondering these thoughts in his mind, he threw himself upon the little bed in the dark and miserable cell. But it was long before he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

ADDERLY'S TRIUMPH MARRED.

The satisfaction which at first Adderly felt, at so completely gaining his revenge on the enemy whom he hated with all the bitterness of a narrow mind, was short lived.

Those members of the Mamaroneck Athletic Club whom he had once counted as his friends were loud in condemnation of his action, and his new acquaintances among the Quinsagamonds were equally emphatic in their disapprobation of his conduct. Goring declared that it was an outrage, and that he should have been satisfied with the proffer of the return of the ring.

As soon as Harry had disappeared in custody of the officer, every one turned the cold shoulder on Adderly except Shillito, who was at all times his chum and toady.

Tuffun the trainer was particularly indignant when he came in from a long walk and heard the news.

"What?" he said, "Harry Armstrong locked up on a charge of highway robbery?"

"Yes," replied Goring, "I am sorry to say, it is only too true."

"Who was the hound that did it?"

Adderly's face flushed scarlet.

"I don't know why I should be called a hound," he exclaimed, "because I merely protected my rights."

"Protected your grandmother?" answered Tuffun; "the Captain of the Club is a gentleman, and you know very well he did not rob you."

"The whole thing was so sudden, that I could not see the robber's face, but he had my ring and refused to give it up, until he saw that I was in earnest. Then, being irritated, I would not accept restitution at the eleventh hour."

"Well, gentlemen," said Tuffun, shrugging his shoulders, "this beats me and I don't know what to make of it. It's small potatoes and very few in the hill. Why didn't some one get bail for Mr. Armstrong?"

"Unhappily," replied Goring, "none of us own real estate, or I know two or three, including myself, who would gladly have done so."

The trainer slapped Adderly rudely on the shoulder.

"See here," he exclaimed, "I want you, sir, to make yourself scarce in this place; just keep out of here, if you please."

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort," answered Adderly. "I have paid my subscription to your gymnasium, until the first of May, and I have a right to come here, just the same as any one else. If you try to put me out, or refuse me admission, I shall sue you for damages."

"I'll return your money."

"And I don't want it; all you have to do is to be civil to me, or it will be the worse for you!"

Grumbling to himself, Tuffun went into his private office, and lighting a cigar, muttered, "I'd just like to use my fists on him for a few minutes, but I guess I'd best keep quiet."

The athletes showed their contempt for Adderly, by taking no notice of him.

He spoke to Scofield about the horizontal bar, asking some trifling question, and Charley said, "Did you address your conversation to me?"

"I did," replied Adderly.

"Then I will thank you in future not to speak to me, as I am in the habit of associating with gentlemen."

"So you mean to imply that I am not worthy to be classed in that category?"

"Place what construction you like on my words," said Scofield, turning away.

Adderly felt this insult very keenly, and bit his lips until the blood came.

"Never mind, old fellow," exclaimed Shillito, trying to comfort him. "These boys are riding the high horse, and I wouldn't take any notice of them."

"It's galling to be treated like this," replied Adderly. "How is it that Armstrong is so popular and every one seems to hate me?"

"Oh! it's a low, deceitful way he's got; he's always hail-fellow-well-met, as they say, with all he meets. They'll find him out some day. Now you have strength of character, and are sure to make enemies."

"I hope he'll be sent up for years, or put in a reformatory," remarked Adderly, savagely grinding his teeth. "Nobody knows how deeply I hate him."

"So do I. In fact, I dislike him just as much as I like you," said Shillito, with insinuating flattery. "You're a fine specimen of an American gentleman, and I'll stick to you through thick and thin."

Adderly liked the flattery, and smiled as he took a set of handsome diamond studs from his vest pocket—they were of the first water and quite valuable.

"You admired these the other day," he said; "and I will make you a present of them."

Shillito's eyes sparkled with delight, for he thought how well he would look in them, next Sunday, when he went to church; and how the girls would stare at him. His father was postmaster in the village; and, though comfortably off, could never afford to buy him diamond studs.

"You are too good," he exclaimed. "I don't like to take them; sha'n't I be robbing you?"

"Not at all."

"Well, I'll keep them in remembrance of the best hearted and most generous fellow I know," said Shillito.

"I wish you would do something for me," exclaimed Adderly, after a brief pause.

"What is it? If it is anything in my power, it shall be done in a flash," was the ready reply.

"An idea occurred to me," Adderly continued, lowering his voice. "I'm rather afraid that Armstrong will get out on bail, and come down here to bully and put on airs. The first thing he does, when he enters the gymnasium, is to climb up the long rope."

"He's about the only one who can get clear away up to the top."

"Yes, of course. We know he does it to show off. Now, if you hear that he is liberated on bail, I want you to get on the trapeze, which will carry you about half-way up the rope. Seize it in your hand; hold on, and cut it with a knife, so that, if there is a strain of a body on it, it will break. That will let the first who gets on it, down, and give him a good shaking."

"Perhaps it will kill him, and Armstrong may not be the first one to climb the rope after all," suggested Shillito.

"I don't care. There is no one here that I

have any regard for," rejoined Adderly, carelessly. "You must be careful that no one sees you, or you may get into trouble."

"I'll do it. In fact I could not refuse you anything; but it is rather risky."

"You shall have my gold watch if you manage it well," said Adderly.

"It is a bargain. Shake hands," replied Shillito, who had long envied the rich young man his watch, and would have cut half a dozen ropes to obtain it.

"Don't say a word to any one," continued Adderly; "because if we are found out we shall change places with Armstrong; and I have an idea that the best side of a prison is the outside."

"So have I," Shillito said, with a feeble attempt at a grin.

After making this infamous compact the conspirators quitted the gymnasium together.

Scofield was preparing to go home, as it was near supper-time.

It was cold and cheerless outside, a severe frost having set in.

"Oh, Charley!" observed Goring, as he passed him, "we are getting up a grand skating carnival. Tell the fellows up at your house it will come off on Thursday, at the mill-pond. We shall have calcium lights and prizes."

"I'll do it," answered Charley. "It's a splendid idea."

"We shall have a five-mile race for a silver medal," Goring went on; "and there will be plain forward and backward skating, outside edge, inside edge, serpentine, both single and double, right with one foot, on to Richmond, grape-vine, Philadelphia twist, foot-spins, and in fact all the fancy figures. The boys will have all the work they want cut out for them."

"Jolly! I know our fellows will come. Good-night."

"And say!" shouted Goring, after him, "tell the boys how sorry we all are about the Captain of the Club, and that we have all given Adderly the dead cut."

Charley thanked him, and hastened home.

Supper was over when he reached Dr. Smiley's, but he did not feel at all hungry, and went directly to the parlor, whence the sound of music proceeded.

Tessy was playing and singing, while Fitzhugh turned over the leaves of the music-book. She sung:

SONG.

"The sweetest flowers are those that bloom
In the early days of the summer bright,
When the greenest leaves are on the trees
And pleasantly gleam in the sun's soft light."

"I walk in the fields in the early morn,
When the grass is covered with silver dew,
Gathering flowers which kiss my hands,
The red, red rose and the violet blue."

"Thank you," Charley heard Fitzhugh say, as he entered. "That is—aw—very pretty; quite charming, you know."

"You are complimentary, Mr. Fitzhugh. It is only a trifling composition of my own, and possesses no great merit," replied Miss Smiley.

Charley coughed, thereby drawing their attention to himself.

"Have you heard the news?" cried Charley, excitedly,

They hastened to assure him that they had not, and begged him to tell them at once.

"Don't give us any wild—aw—rumors," said Fitzhugh. "But substantial—aw—facts."

"Be quiet, Mr. Fitzhugh, please," exclaimed Tessy. "I am in a state of suspense, for I know that Scofield has some important news."

"Yes, I have, Miss Smiley," rejoined Charley. "In the first place we are going to have a grand skating carnival on the mill-pond with calcium lights and music."

"Oh! pshaw!"

"And there is going to be an assault of arms at the gymnasium."

"I don't call that news."

"But I haven't come to the most important part," said Charley. "Sim Adderly has had Armstrong arrested and sent to prison on a charge of stealing your ring from him on the highway."

Tessy uttered a cry, and her face went very white, as she and Fitzhugh exchanged glances.

"Your fault, Miss Smiley," exclaimed the Englishman: "you—aw—broke Harry's heart about the ring, you know."

"Oh! yes—yes. I see it now," replied Tessy, bursting into tears. "How unkind I have been to that poor boy and now I have ruined him."

"But it isn't true," said Charley. "We all feel it is not and we've cut Adderly."

Tessy continued to cry, with her handkerchief

to her eyes, and Fitzhugh carried on the examination of Charley.

"How do you—aw—know that he is not guilty?" he asked.

"Harry said he bought it from a tramp, and it must have been the tramp who robbed Adderly of the ring."

"That's not unlikely, you know."

Tessy dried her tears and looked up.

"If there are highway robbers about," she said, "I hope nothing has happened to papa. He went down to the village this afternoon, and it is quite time he was back."

"Perhaps he is detained on business," remarked Charley.

"I never knew him to stay out so late as this," she replied.

At this juncture Mr. Snapper entered the room, and his elongated countenance looked graver than usual.

"Oh! you are there, Scofield," he exclaimed. "I think you might have reported yourself in the school-room."

"I had other things to attend to, sir," said Charley.

"Your studies should have the first claim on your attention."

Scarcely had he uttered these words than Pat, an Irish servant, rushed into the room.

"Och! be jabels, miss," he exclaimed, "an' it's bad luck that's befallen the master, so it is."

"For heaven's sake, what do you mean?" cried Tessy. "Is my dear father hurt?"

"He's been waylaid and robbed, miss. It's true, indade it is. Bad 'cess to the vill'ins!"

CHAPTER XI.

FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE.

"ROBBED! where is he? Take me to him!"

"They're bringing him in as fast as they can. Farmer Sanford and his man were going by with a load of hay, an' they saved the master from being murdered and cotched the thafe, so they did."

Fitzhugh, Charley and Mr. Snapper had rushed out at the first intimation of this bad news; and, in the hall, they encountered Farmer Sanford, who was supporting Dr. Smiley.

The doctor's face was covered with blood, which flowed from a cut on the head.

Behind him was a poor, emaciated-looking wretch, ragged and dirty, who was held tightly in the clutch of the farmer's hired man.

Being conducted into the parlor, every attention was paid the injured man, who, though considerably hurt, was not seriously injured. His wound was washed and plastered up, when he gave the following account of the robbery:

About a quarter of a mile from home, he was accosted by the robber, who demanded money, a request which Dr. Smiley did not think fit to comply with. Thereupon the foot-pad commenced a violent attack upon him, and would probably have succeeded in murdering him, if Farmer Sanford had not come up so opportunely.

A brief struggle ensued, which resulted in the capture of the highwayman, and Dr. Smiley was assisted to his house.

After all that could be done for the sick man was accomplished, the party turned their attention to the thief; who, tightly bound, had been awaiting his fate in the hall.

"Seeing that you're hurt," said Mr. Sanford, "I guess I'll drive the scoundrel over to the jail and give him in custody of the sheriff."

"Do so," replied Dr. Smiley. "I shall be well enough in a day or two, I hope, to prosecute."

The man was put in the hay wagon and driven off, though he begged hard for his liberty.

About ten o'clock the jail was reached, and the sheriff notified of the arrival of a prisoner.

"It's rather irregular," he said, "to bring him to me, before he has had an examination and been committed; but under the circumstances I suppose I am justified in holding him. We are rather full just now; the sessions come on next week and the calendar is heavy. We shall have to double him up with some prisoner."

"I don't care so long as the rascal is safe," replied Sanford.

"Safe enough—do you want a receipt for him?" laughed the sheriff.

The robber was conducted inside the jail and rudely pushed into a cell, which contained already one occupant, who jumped up in bed, at this intrusion on his privacy.

"What do you want in here?" he asked.

"I've got as much right here as you have," was the reply.

A thin ray of light from the gas-jet penetrated the cell through the grating.

"I say," exclaimed the first occupant of the room, "hav'n't I seen you before to-day?"

"May be. Your voice seems kinder familiar."

"Are you not the tramp, Gideon, that I bought a ring from?"

"If you're the young gentleman with the iron fist I had a muss with, I reckon you're on the right scent."

By a strange fatality the man who had attacked Dr. Smiley was Gideon, and by a yet more singular coincidence he had been put in the same cell with Harry Armstrong.

"What is the trouble?" asked Harry.

"I got collared while robbing an old gent. It served me right for being too greedy; for I had made well during the day and ought to have let well alone. But what fixed you, Squire?"

"I was accused of stealing the ring I bought from you?"

"Is that all?"

"It has placed me in a very peculiar and unpleasant position," said Harry.

"I'll get you out of it," exclaimed the tramp.

"You will?" cried Harry, delightedly.

"Why not? It is true you licked me; but that was my own fault, and you were kind to me after all. I'm sure to go up for two years; nothing can save me; the evidence is too direct. Why shouldn't I clear you?"

Harry now felt perfectly happy, and went to sleep, confident that in the morning he would be a free man, without a stain upon his character. The whole situation had changed as if by the wave of a magician's wand.

"Hope on, hope ever, and never despair," thought the Captain of the Club, as he closed his eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CUT ROPE.

EARLY in the morning the news of Harry's arrest and incarceration reached Sam Armstrong, who was naturally very indignant.

He kept the matter a secret from Mrs. Armstrong for fear of distressing her; went at once to the justice who had committed his brother, and offered substantial bail, which was accepted.

Then he drove over to the jail and procured Harry's liberation.

The tramp's testimony was taken before another magistrate, and in a few hours the young gentleman was unconditionally liberated.

"Thank goodness, this unpleasant affair is all over," said Sam.

"I wish you had let me know of it last night; you should not have gone to the jail at all."

"I was afraid of frightening mother," replied Harry.

"I understand your motives and they do you credit."

"What am I to do with the ring?" inquired Harry.

"Keep it. All Adderly can do is to sue you for it."

"Are you sure? It is stolen property, and I fear I have no right to it."

"Stick to it and chance it," exclaimed Sam; "or, better still, give it to Miss Smiley. I would not let that wretch Adderly have the satisfaction of wearing it again, if possible."

This advice thoroughly coincided with Harry's inclinations, and he gladly adopted it.

"Now," he added, "there is one more thing I want to ask you."

"Out with it," said his brother.

"If I meet Adderly, as I suppose I shall, in what way shall I treat him?"

"With silent contempt," answered Sam. "You cannot touch pitch without being defiled. The law says you must not strike a man, and nothing is ever gained by a brutal assault. Ignore him."

"I will, though it is hard not to be able to go for him," said Harry, with a sigh.

"Come to the gymnasium, show yourself, and then I will drive you up to Smiley's," exclaimed Sam.

Going to the stables, they put up the buggy and walked to Tuffun's, meeting the trainer at the door.

"Glad to see you, sir," he cried. "It's all right, I hope."

Harry gave him an account of all that had happened, and Tuffun was delighted.

It being early, there were only a few people in the gymnasium; but the news got about

in a few minutes, when numbers came up to congratulate the Captain of the Club on the vindication of his character.

Among those who arrived to verify the report were Adderly and Shillito. The former was greatly enraged at the lucky incident which had occurred to so soon liberate his hated enemy.

"Yes; there he is, with that brother of his," he said. "It's all true, and I am baffled again."

"Shall I do what you suggested last night?" asked Shillito.

"The rope! by all means, if you can get a chance, but for both our sakes be careful."

"No fear," replied the cowardly assassin.

He instantly sprung on the trapeze; and, being a good gymnast, was soon swinging high in the air.

No one watched him, for all were crowded around the two brothers, listening with breathless interest to the story of Harry's escape.

Armstrong's surprise was great when he learnt that Dr. Smiley was the victim of the tramp's third attempt at highway robbery, and he was much rejoiced to hear that he was not much hurt.

Being a man not easily discouraged, Adderly had the assurance to walk up to the group.

"Armstrong," he exclaimed, "I am sorry that I made a mistake which must have caused you considerable annoyance."

Sam turned sharply round.

"We don't want any apologies," he said.

"Pardon me," replied Adderly, "I am not talking to you."

"But I am to you, Sim Adderly," retorted Sam, "and I have known you for years as a sneak and a coward. You are no friend of me or mine, and therefore we do not want to have anything to do with you."

"Why do you interfere?"

"Because I choose to," replied Sam, with a contemptuous stare, which was very hard to bear.

"Oh! well," continued Adderly, "the matter is very simple. I merely want my ring."

"I refuse to give it you," answered Harry.

"On what grounds?"

"If you think you have any right or title to it, take your legal remedy. You are fond of law, you know."

At this there was a laugh, and Adderly turned away, his pallor deepening, and his heart consumed with envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness.

Shillito had come down from the trapeze and joined his friend.

"I've done it," he whispered.

"Where did you cut it?" asked Adderly in the same voice.

"About half-way up."

"Good!"

Just then a little twelve-year-old brother of Adderly's entered the gymnasium, humming "A sailor's wife, a sailor's star should be, yeave, ho!"

"Hello! Adrian," said Adderly. "What do you want here?"

"Mother sent me for you," replied the boy.

"Run back home and tell her I'll be over in five minutes."

"Sha'n't," answered Adrian, curtly.

He was a spoilt child, and the darling pet of his parents, tall for his age, with black curly hair and an independent bearing, very different from his elder brother's somewhat slinking look.

"You go home right away," continued Adderly.

"Why should I?"

"Because I say so."

"But I want to have some fun now I'm here. If I go back I'll be sent to school."

"That's the proper place for you. If you don't go, you young cub, I'll lick you," said Adderly.

"Catch me first," replied the youngster, nimbly eluding his grasp as his big brother made a grab at him.

Harry Armstrong had thrown off his coat and said to Sam, "Wait till I take a turn on the bars and I'll go up home with you. I generally shin up the rope every morning; it is splendid exercise for the arms."

He went to the horizontal bars first, and meanwhile Adrian had been dodging his brother, who had pursued him.

Suddenly he made a dash for the long rope.

"You'll have to follow me, if you want me," he cried, laughing.

Adderly was horror-stricken.

He was afraid to utter any warning, and contented himself with calling to him to come down.

But the boy went up hand over hand, fully determined to ascend to the giddy height.

"Come down, come down," shouted Adderly.

Adrian responded with a merry peal of laughter.

"I'll give you five dollars, if you do what I tell you."

"No you won't, Sim. I know you."

"But I say I will. It's a promise."

"Promises are like pie-crust, made to be broken," laughed the boy.

He was now about twenty feet from the ground and in play began to sway himself to and fro.

Suddenly the rope broke, just where Shillito had cut it, its weakened strands not being able any longer to bear the strain.

There was a cry of horror from all present, which mingled with a despairing shriek from Adrian.

Then a body crashed on the floor with a dull, sickening thud.

Adderly turned away, and hid his face in his hands to shut out the awful spectacle.

It was the old story of the biter bit.

He had laid a trap for another, and had, as it were, unwittingly fallen into it himself.

Instead of Harry Armstrong being the victim of his malevolence, it was his little brother; his mother's darling, his father's pride, and one whom he loved himself, as much as it was in his sordid nature to care for any one.

Thoroughly alarmed, and afraid he might betray himself by his agitation, Shillito ran out of the gymnasium.

"Oh! God, my little brother," cried Adderly, in a tone of genuine agony.

Every one was touched by his expression of grief, and made way for him as he approached the spot where the child fell.

Adrian was insensible; he groaned as if in pain, and the corners of his mouth twitched convulsively, while blood came out of his nostrils and ears.

Adderly held him in his arms and conjured him to speak to him.

"You are not dying, Adry," he said. "Say something. Where are you hurt?"

No answer was returned, and so the sad scene continued until a doctor came and pushed aside the hushed spectators.

He made a brief and cursory examination of the body, after which he ordered the boy to be taken home at once, as he would have to undress him and put him to bed, before he could attend to his injuries.

While they were putting him on a hastily torn-down door, Adderly recovered his presence of mind sufficiently to ask the nature of the injuries.

"Oh! doctor," he exclaimed. "He is not going to die, is he? This will break mother's heart. Tell me what is the matter with him."

"He'll live," replied the doctor; "but he will be a cripple for life."

"For life!"

"Yes, sir. There is a compound fracture of the tibia, and he'll never walk straight as long as he lives."

Adderly hung his head, a self-confessed villain.

And this was what all his plotting against Armstrong had come to: he had made his own brother a cripple for life. The pet of his parents and the sunshine of the household would never be able to run about and play like other boys.

Soon a mournful procession started for the luxurious home of the wealthy Mr. Adderly, and Sim headed it with bowed head and tears in his eyes.

Truly, wickedness brings its own punishment with it.

Tuffur was greatly exercised at this unexpected and unparalleled accident in his gymnasium.

"I never saw the beat of it," he remarked as he picked up the rope and handled it. "Who ever heard of a rope breaking in that way? You might as well expect the best bower anchor to part from a ship."

Suddenly he looked at the end of the rope and uttered an exclamation.

"Great Caesar!" he cried, "look at this! It's been *half cut through!* There's been foul play here, and I'll find out who's at the bottom of it."

"The rope cut?" said Harry Armstrong.

"Look at it."

Harry did so, and there was no denying the fact.

"Who could have done it?" he asked.

"Mr. Armstrong," said the trainer, "I don't want to make any accusation against any one, but you are the first generally to shin up that rope. It's my opinion it was cut for your especial benefit; hang me if I don't."

"Who could have done such a cowardly thing?"

"Wait. Time will show. I'll just keep this rope anyway," replied the trainer.

Sam Armstrong took his brother's arm.

"Come," he said; "let us go."

They quitted the gymnasium together, and calling at the stables, got out the buggy and drove to Dr. Smiley's.

The Captain of the Club pondered over the trainer's words. He thought of Adderly and was of the opinion that he had had a very narrow escape indeed.

himself in position, though it was evident that he was very reluctant to do so.

The foils clashed as they crossed, and the bout began.

Shillito made three clear hits in succession, much to the surprise of the spectators, who all knew that Adderly was a remarkably fine swordsman.

"Go in and win," exclaimed his friends.

"Make a point!"

The game consisted of seven points or hits on the breast, the one who obtained seven first, winning.

But still the luck was against Adderly.

He either couldn't or wouldn't touch his adversary.

At length he lost patience at the jeers of the crowd; and, lunging *en carte* struck his opponent in the breast.

Suddenly Shillito uttered a loud cry, dropped his foil and fell heavily to the floor.

An exclamation of horror arose from the spectators.

A thin hole was seen in Shillito's doublet from which the blood was flowing.

The button had been filed off the foil, and its steel point had entered the unfortunate young man's lungs.

Adderly stood aghast and seemed utterly dumbfounded.

"Shame! shame!" cried every one.

"It was an accident," said Adderly.

Harry Armstrong sunk on his knees and supported Shillito's head.

"Are you much hurt?" he asked.

"I am dying," replied Shillito, faintly.

A purple stream issued from his lips and he spoke with difficulty.

Again Adderly asserted loudly that it was an accident.

"It is untrue!" said Shillito, faintly. "He did it on purpose."

"How?"

"He did not mean to kill me, but he told me that he should file off the button from the foil and challenge you."

"Me!"

"Yes; I am speaking the truth. If you fell, he said people would call it an accident."

Tuffur, the trainer, waited no longer.

"Seize him," he exclaimed, pointing to Adderly. "He is a murderer."

Half a dozen willing hands seized Adderly, who struggled fiercely, but was soon overpowered.

"It is a foul lie!" he cried.

"Not so," groaned Shillito. "As I am going to die at his hands, I may as well make a clean breast of it. Come nearer to me, Harry."

The Captain of the Club bent down lower.

"Are you here?" asked Shillito, faintly.

"Yes; close to you."

"I can't see you. There is a mist before my eyes and everything swims."

"Speak quickly."

"I will. *It was I who cut the rope* at Adderly's dictation."

"What was the object?"

"He thought you would be the first to climb up it; but God is just. It was his own little brother who got injured."

The spectators looked at Adderly with unutterable loathing.

Those who had him in charge dragged him from the room, and he was speedily on his way to the jail, to which he had been so anxious to send Harry a short time before.

This melancholy incident put a stop to the further progress of the assault at arms.

The people slowly dispersed.

Shillito was taken home, and owing to the care which was bestowed upon him, lived for a few years.

Then he died.

Adderly was sent to the State's Prison for twenty years.

But little remains to be added.

Harry Armstrong completed his studies and married Tessy, after which he went into business with his brother Sam, and is now a thriving merchant.

He and Sam are still athletes and members of the club, having gained the appellation of the "Terrors of the Harlem," for there is no one who can beat them on the river or the land.

It has been our purpose to inculcate the moral, that honesty is the best policy and we hope we have succeeded in our endeavor.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VILLAIN UNMASKED.

THE accident in the gymnasium which resulted so disastrously to young Adderly was extensively commented upon in Sweetwater.

It was plainly evident that some dastardly coward had cut the rope, and every one agreed that, if discovered, he ought to be punished severely.

Everything went on smoothly at Dr. Smiley's. Tessy forgave Harry for not winning the ring, to recover which Adderly commenced a suit at law; but meanwhile the Captain of the Club wore it on his finger, until the judge decided to whom it should belong.

Finding that Tessy only cared for Harry, Fitzhugh made up his mind to travel West. He was deeply in love with the young lady, and being convinced that he had no chance of winning her affections, he concluded that change of scene would enable him to forget her.

"Must see the country, you know, old fellow," he remarked to Harry. "New York isn't America, and I'll take a look round—aw—by Jove, I will."

"We shall miss you very much," said Harry.

"Ah! well, I'll write to you."

So he started for Chicago, and they heard of him, long after, killing large numbers of buffalo on the plains.

The weather changed suddenly and the ice broke up; which rendered it impossible to hold the skating carnival they had been talking about.

The idea was abandoned, but great preparations were made for the assault at arms.

On the evening appointed, the gymnasium was crowded with spectators.

First came a wrestling match between the two captains of the clubs, Armstrong and Gorring, in which our hero won two falls out of three, amid great applause.

The next noteworthy feat was done by Harry, who took an ordinary cavalry sword sharpened to a delicate edge, and at one blow cut a sheep in half, and subsequently, a silk handkerchief being thrown in the air, he divided it, at a single stroke.

Then followed the tug-of-war, between a picked team of the Mamaronecks and one of the Quinsagamonds.

This was fiercely contested, resulting in a victory for the 'Necks,' who pulled the 'Quins' across the line amid deafening shouts.

Adderly then challenged Armstrong to fence with him, with foils.

"Thank you," replied Harry; "I only fence with gentlemen."

Adderly became livid.

"Do you wish to insult me?" he asked.

"Yes, I do, and you can take it up, if you want to."

Sam Armstrong clapped his hands.

"Well said, Harry!" he exclaimed.

Adderly played nervously with his foil; and Shillito, who was always ready to come to the rescue of his leader, approached.

"I'll fence with you," he exclaimed.

"That isn't what I want," replied Adderly.

"You're challenged!" cried the boys.

Shillito put on a mask and doublet, took a foil from a stand in the corner, and placed himself on guard.

"Sa! ha!" he cried, stamping his foot on the floor.

Adderly could not retreat, and he, too, placed

THE END.

the cavern. When we wished to go out we pushed the trap *upward*, thereby turning the water from about the opening, and enabling us to make an exit, though we were always compelled to wrap a blanket or buffalo-skin around us to escape a thorough wetting, as much water found its way into the cavern when the door was up; the water, however, did not render the cave disagreeable, for it found its way out immediately, through a narrow passage opening into the creek at the foot of yon rapids. My object, Willis, in staying in the place was to be near you, and search for our child, whom I lost track of after leaving the tribe, and of whom I never heard until the day I worked the secret from Henri Roche, by pretending I was dying," and Cecil Gray laughed at the remembrance of that meeting with the outlaw.

At this juncture a low exclamation burst from Gray's lips, as he fixed his eyes upon the bed of the creek before him.

He saw something thrust upward in the water, revealing a small cavity through which a dark, hairy form suddenly appeared.

"Tis brother!" cried Cecil. "Tom! Tom!"

The form leaped from the opening, threw aside its hairy robe, and the next instant Willis Gray grasped his brother-in-law, a tall, sad-looking man, by the hand.

When Cecil and her husband returned to camp on the Boyer, her brother went with them, with the determination of leaving the country forever.

Hawkeye Harry now received an explanation of the mystery of the smoke ascending from the basswood tree, and the hairy form he saw rise from the bed of the creek and slay the Indian, and Tom was indeed the "Unknown." The young ranger was not a little surprised when he learned, also, that the occupants of the cave knew of his presence by the creek that night.

But with this mystery we are done.

The party resumed their journey to the fort, and reached the point in due season and in safety.

And now came the "tug of war"—the parting of friends and lovers. But, with the renewal of pledges and love vows, in tears and entreaties, the separation took place.

Calvin Gardette and his daughter, Willis and Cecil Gray and their daughter, all departed for the East, as also did Richard Parker.

Hawkeye Harry remained at the fort, but it was only for a short time. A year later found him in one of the leading Eastern schools, and still a few years later he went to the home of Nora Gardette, and claimed a fulfillment of their vows made years ago upon the banks of Boyer river.

With his young wife Harry Houston went West, where he laid the foundation of wealth, prominence, and the best of all, a joyous and happy life.

Richard Parker married Gertie Gray, and theirs was a life as bright and full of sunshine, as the life of Gertie's parents had been dark and clouded.

THE END.

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